PLAYSTATION 4

PLAY 101 PS4 ESSENTIALS

ISSUE NO 244
SCORE: PLAYSTATION 4, XBOX 1

UNCHARTED
THE INSIDE STORY
New Naughty Dog interviews chart past, present and future

50 BIGGEST GAMES
30 KILLER FEATURES
10 BEST STUDIOS
& MORE PS4 MUST-HAVES!

FIRST HANDS-ON
THE CREW

GOD OF WAR
How an angry man became a PlayStation icon

"DEMAND HAS BEEN UNFATHOMABLE"
Gearbox's Randy Pitchford on returning to Borderlands

ALSO
MERCENARY KINGS
ARKHAM KNIGHT
LEGO THE HOBBIT
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SNIPER ELITE III
TRIALS FUSION
OCTODAD
SACRED 3
& MORE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
DAVID CAGE

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Welcome PLAY

The UK's only independent **PlayStation** magazine

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6 COUNT 'EM!
101 ways PS4 is trouncing the competition

DOIN' IT RIGHT

I HATE THE internet. I mean, obviously it's really good for looking at funny videos of cats and streaming entire seasons of shows you'd never have considered watching had they not been thrown into your lap. But for gaming news and reviews, it just tends to be a bit of a mess. It's that mad dash to be first that ruins things, quality often sacrificed in favour of pure speed, or professionalism cast aside just to ensure that a review is live the second an embargo lifts. Buying advice offered by people who *nearly* finished *DmC* or *Revengeance* on Easy, RPGs reviewed with only a few hours on the in-game clock... hell, we've even seen people cough up rudimentary factual inaccuracies and *get the name of the game wrong* as a result of racing to be among the first out with a review. It's embarrassing, frankly.

That's the difference between us and them. While online is a sprint, magazine production is a marathon. We've got (well, we *make*) that much more time to do things properly, be it throwing hundreds of hours at an RPG or running multiple playthroughs of games to offer a level of insight you very rarely see online. Don't get us wrong, there are some sites that do a good job. But in the fiercely competitive world of timely click-bait, there are always going to be traffic-hungry blogs racing content out and the rest of the web is left to either follow suit or bite the bullet and miss out.

As long as that's the case (and I don't see it changing any time soon), there'll always be a place for magazines – a place for people to take their time over critical writing and do both products and audience justice. And as long as that place exists, our passionate, experienced and dedicated team of experts will be right there, doing their thing. So next time you read a review of 'Ninja Garden' online that criticises the game for being too easy, just think about that...

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see ya online.

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@LukemonMGJ
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CURRENTLY PLAYING
Destiny Of Spirits (Vita)

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THE EVOLUTION OF UNCHARTED
New interviews document the rise and future of Sony's leading exclusive

PLAY Contents

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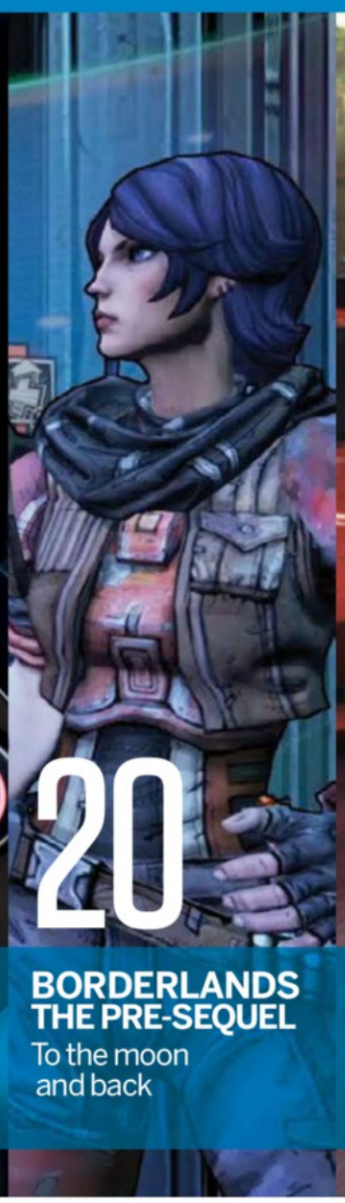

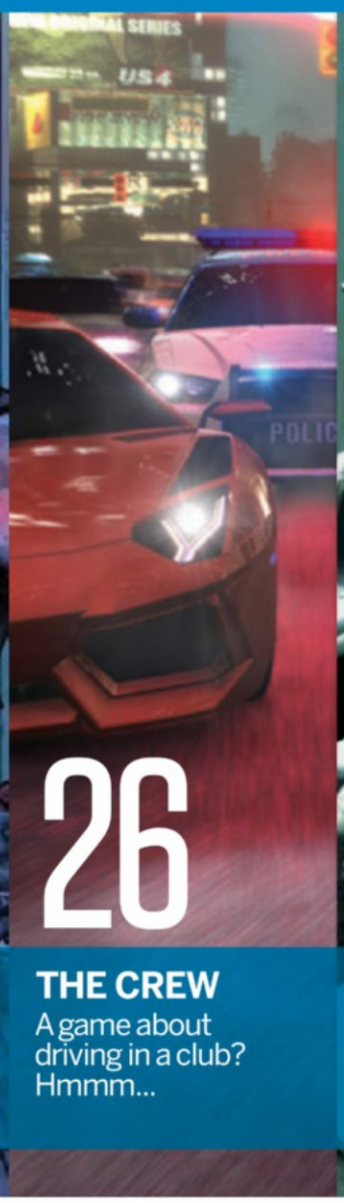

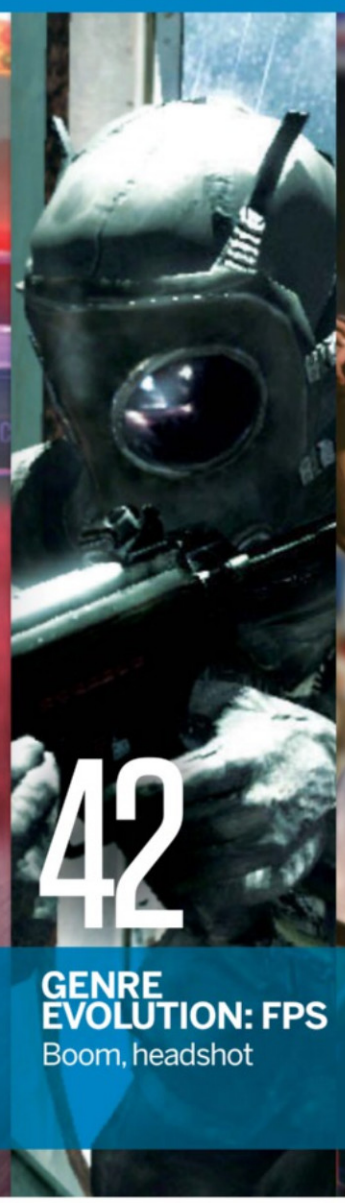

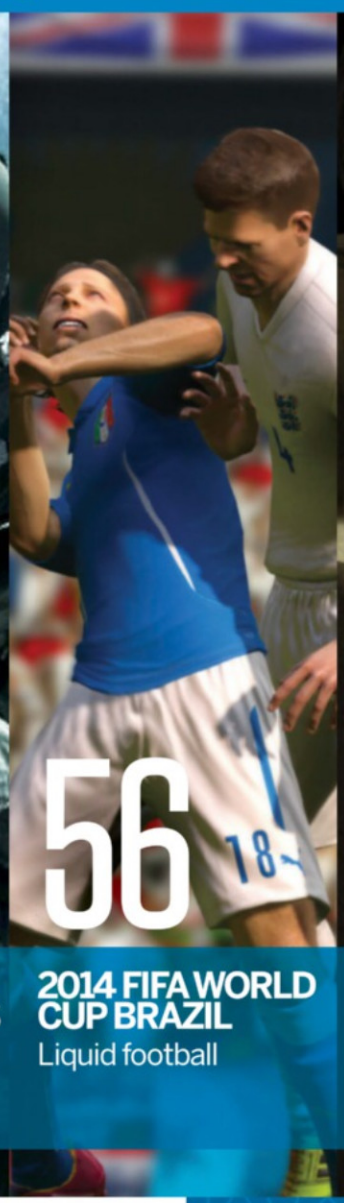

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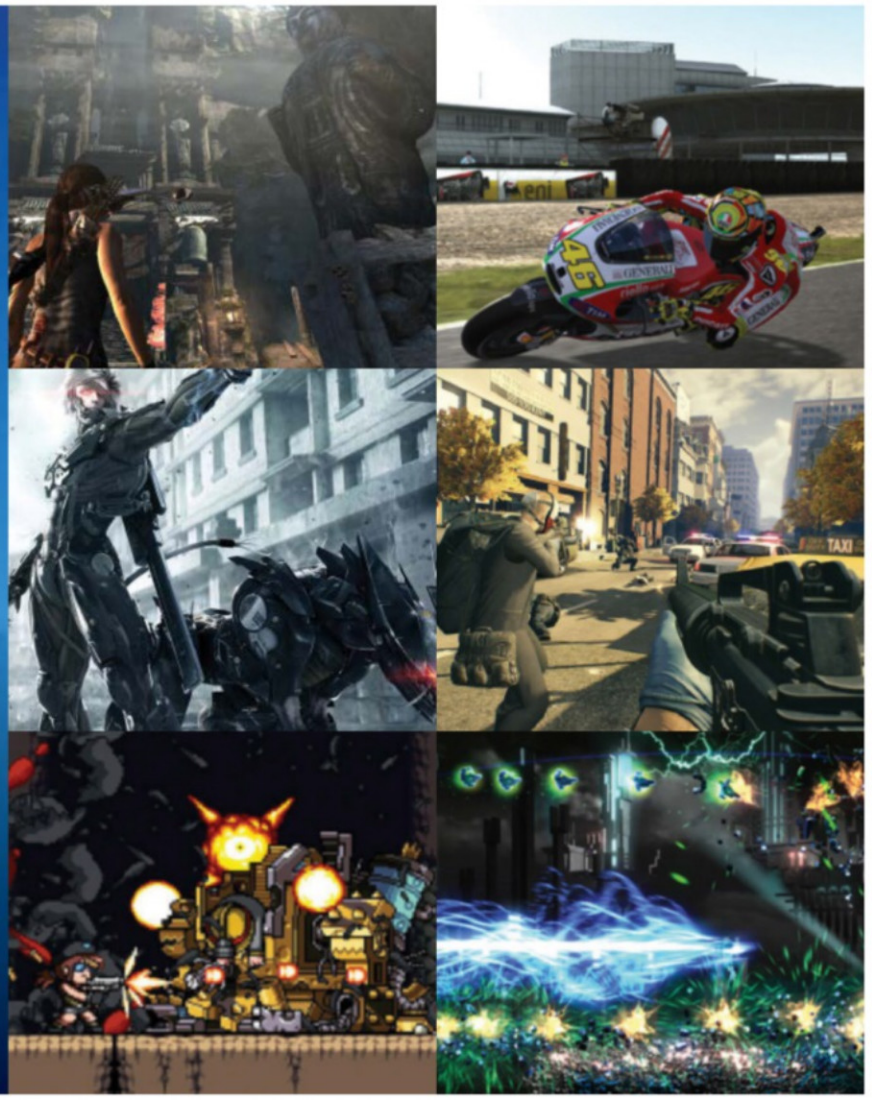
101 PS4 ESSENTIALS

The list to end all arguments

THIS IS IT. THE DEFINITIVE LIST THAT WILL PUT AN END TO ALL CONSOLE WARS FOREVER. ALRIGHT, MAYBE NOT, BUT WE ARE SO IN LOVE WITH OUR PS4S THAT WE'VE TAKEN THE TIME TO PUT TOGETHER A MAMMOTH 101 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD OWN ONE. TOO MUCH? PROBABLY!



1 PS PLUS

PlayStation Plus has gone from an underwhelming and unnecessary competitor to Xbox Live Gold to arguably the best part of owning a PlayStation console. Anyone who owns a PS4 and doesn't also have a PS Plus subscription is simply doing it wrong, as not only are you missing out on online multiplayer but also a boatload of free games that essentially means you never need to buy another full-price game again. The only downside is that our backlog of games to play just keeps getting bigger and bigger...

2 PS NOW

The other feather in PlayStation's online cap, PS Now is streaming technology based on the Gaikai tech that Sony bought last year. While it's some way off from being operational, the potential is there to eventually have a full catalogue of games from every PlayStation console, available to stream and play directly not only on the PS4 but also Vita, tablets and smart TVs. Imagine Netflix for games and you've got the right idea.

3 ON-DEMAND VIDEO

Between Netflix and Amazon Prime, you don't really need to watch normal TV anymore. The various video apps on PS4 are simple and work well.

4 MUSIC UNLIMITED

Sony's music service offers a great deal for gamers who want music streaming directly on their console. You can even listen while playing other games.

5 COMPANION APPS

A bunch of games have their own companion apps that can enhance the experience and give you various in-game bonuses for using them. Pretty neat.

6 FREE-TO-PLAY (WITHOUT PS PLUS)

The PS4 marks the proper debut of free-to-play as a force to be reckoned with on console. These games don't even need PS Plus to be played online.

7 SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

Loads of games let you post updates directly to social media, because god forbid you ever do anything without all of your internet friends knowing about it.

8 1080p60

While some other consoles (Xbox One) struggle, the PS4 is good at maintaining 1080p resolution and/or 60 frames per second across most of its games.

9 SECOND SCREEN (TABLET/PHONE)

Using your tablet or phone to control your PS4 or as a second screen for certain games is just another example of our connected, awesome future.

10 TROPHY RARITY

Being able to see the rarity of your Trophies adds another level of obsession to our already-addled minds. Platinums are no longer enough...

11 STREAMING (SHARING/WATCHING)

The ability to stream is a great addition that makes the PS4 more social than ever. We've only just started seeing the potential of interactive streaming, too.

12 4K VIDEO

You'll need a really big TV to see the difference, but the PS4 has the potential to output at a staggering 4K resolution, at least for video. That's a lot of pixels.

13 PS3 UPGRADE PROGRAMMES

The ability to upgrade PS3 games to PS4 for a reduced price is a welcome one. Hopefully there will be an option to do so for *The Last Of Us*...

14 SHARE BUTTON SCREENSHOTS

Capturing screenshots is easier than ever on PS4, and being able to directly share them to Facebook and Twitter is the icing on the cake.

15 HDMI STREAMING

HDCP can be disabled following a recent patch, which allows streaming via HDMI capture kits – great for streamers who want more control over their videos.

16 CLOUD SAVES

Got PS Plus? Then you have the ability to upload your save files to the cloud, both for safe storage and the chance to quickly download them on another PS4.

17 SUSPEND/RESUME

Every console does it now, but the suspend function on PS4 is still the smoothest we've seen to date. Dropping in and out of a game is effortless and quick.

18 VOICE CONTROL

While the PlayStation Camera is plugged in, many features and applications can be launched simply by saying their names. Welcome to the future!

19 GO DIGITAL ON THE PS STORE

On the whole, the PS Store is a great place to find a deal or two. Sony is known for its excellent sales, discounting huge numbers of games at a time. As we near the digital-only future, having a more user-friendly PS Store is more important than ever, and PS4 already delivers.

20 REMOTE PLAY

Sure, you need a Vita as well, but if you have both a PS4 and Sony's wonderful handheld, a world of possibility opens up. Remote Play – streaming PS4 gameplay to the Vita – works extremely well, with no discernable lag to speak of in almost all cases. If someone else wants to use the TV but you don't want to stop playing, Remote Play is your saviour.

"A LOT OF PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT VR IS GOING TO BE THE NEXT BIG THING, AND SONY WANTS A SLICE OF THAT TASTY VIRTUAL REALITY PIE"

21 PROJECT MORPHEUS

A lot of people believe that VR is going to be the next big thing, and Sony wants a slice of that tasty virtual reality pie. Project Morpheus is the upcoming VR headset for the PS4, and although it's only been demoed with a few basic games so far, the potential is enormous. Early reports claim the Morpheus is just as good as the Oculus Rift, the other big VR headset currently making waves.

22 PS3 SAVE TRANSFER

Only a few games have done it, but it's neat to be able to transfer your PS3 save state over to the PS4 version of the same game.

23 MOVE SUPPORT

The PS4 still supports Move (the same tech's in the DualShock 4), and *LittleBigPlanet* dev Media Molecule is said to be developing a game for it.

24 VIDEO EDITING

ShareFactory came in with the last update, a vast video editing suite to chop and change your vids before shoving them online for the world to see.

25 GYRO CONTROL

We've come a long way from Sony putting motion sensors in the DualShock 3. The gyro in the DS4 is great for navigating the virtual keyboard.

26 USB PERIPHERAL SUPPORT

Plug in a bunch of USB peripherals, such as keyboards, mice, headsets and more, and most of them will work just fine on the PS4.

27 FACE RECOGNITION

If you've got the PS Camera, you can set the PS4 to log you in automatically by recognising your face. Who needs Kinect?

28 YOUTUBE UPLOAD

The ability to upload videos directly to YouTube is still in the works, but workarounds already exist via USB export or Facebook downloads.

29 'REMASTERS'

If you didn't play them the first time, remasters of games like *Tomb Raider* offer a great opportunity to experience these titles in their ultimate forms.

30 INTERACTIVE STREAMING

Watching someone play a game and directly interacting with their experience is a great idea that we hope to see more of as time goes by.

DEVELOPERS

31 NAUGHTY DOG

You know it, you love it, you can't live without it. Since the golden days of *Crash Bandicoot* through to modern masterpiece *The Last Of Us*, Naughty Dog has knocked it out of the park again and again and again. With a new *Uncharted* game on the way and other goodies in store, Naughty Dog is just as large a reason to own a PlayStation console as ever.

32 HOUSEMARQUE

Resogun is fantastic, and Housemarque isn't done there. A new expansion is on the way that the studio has hyped up to be even better. Could it be true?

33 GUERRILLA GAMES

It made the staggeringly beautiful *Killzone Shadow Fall*, and now Guerrilla is working on an entirely new IP. Whatever it is, it'll look damn good.

34 SOE

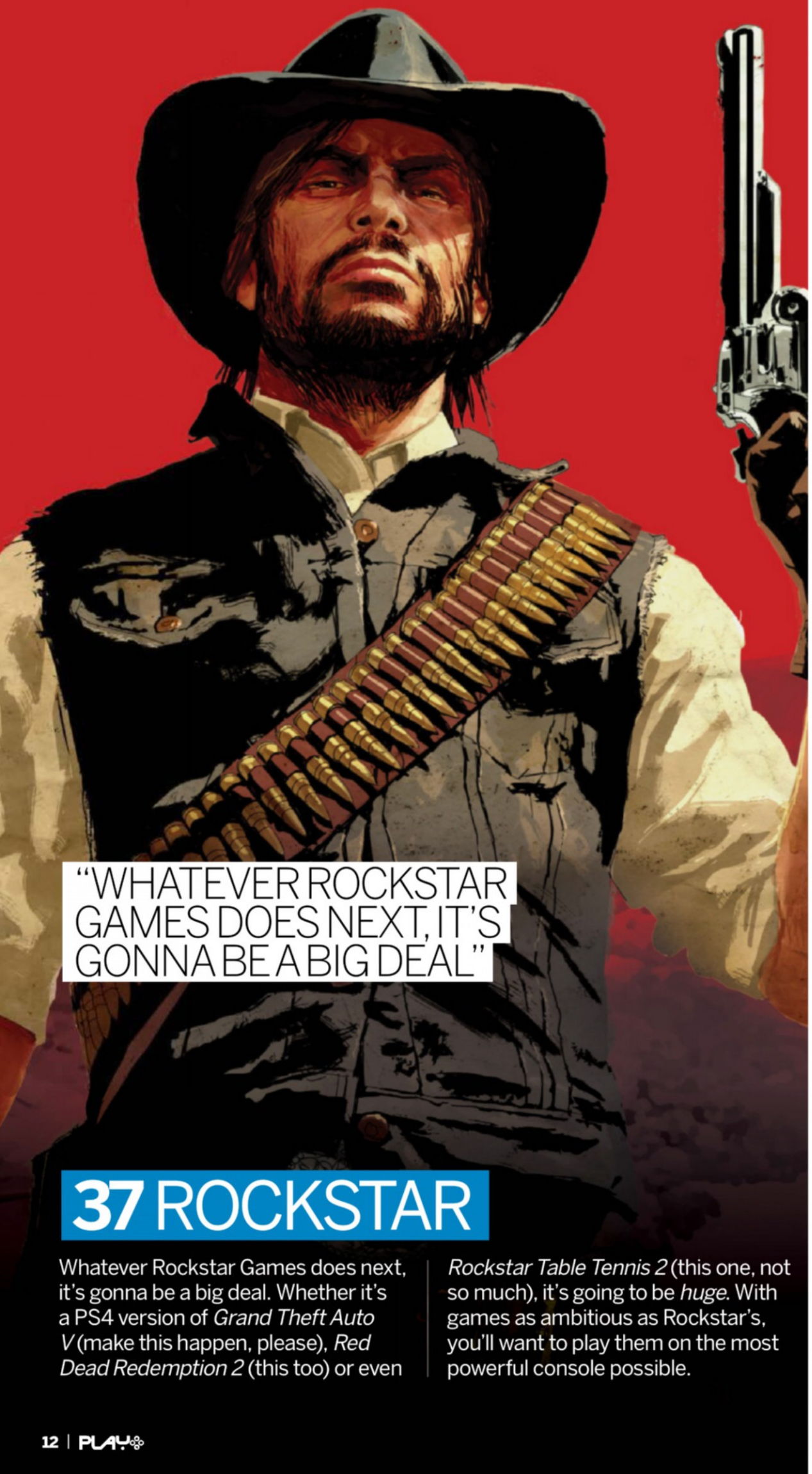
Creator of great MMOs like *EverQuest*, *PlanetSide* and *Star Wars Galaxies* (RIP), SOE is a wonderful studio and more of its games are coming to PS4. Hooray!

35 SUCKER PUNCH

inFamous: Second Son is done and dusted, so another Sony-owned studio gets to work on the next big thing. Another *inFamous* or a new franchise?

36 SONY SANTA MONICA

You might have heard of a little series called *God Of War*. Since bursting onto the scene, Sony Santa Monica has produced a number of great games exclusively for PlayStation platforms. Besides helping Ready At Dawn out with the PS4 exclusive *The Order: 1886*, SSA is also working on an as-yet unannounced project that really gets us excited.

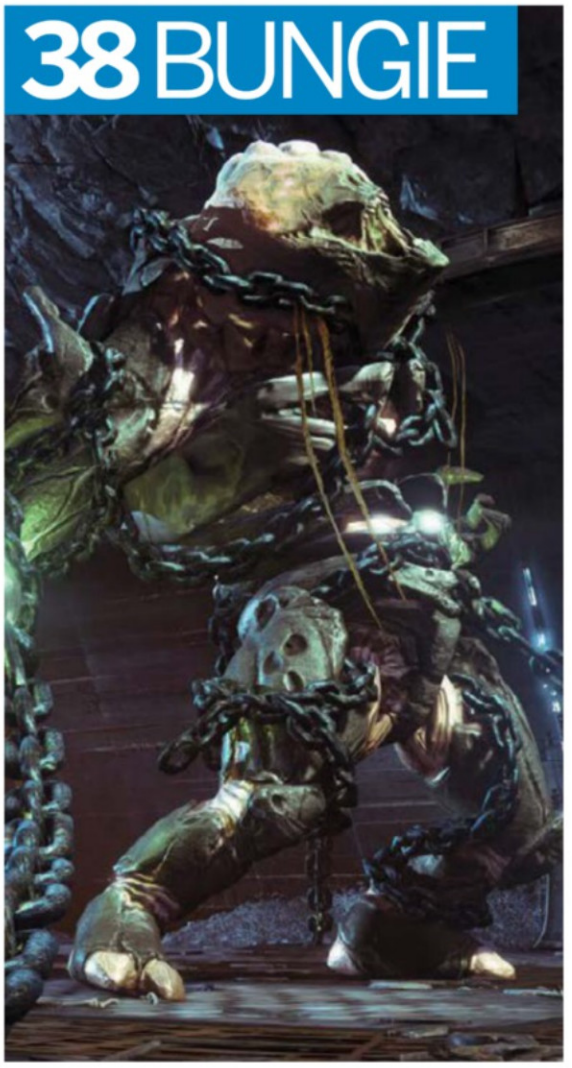


"WHATEVER ROCKSTAR GAMES DOES NEXT, IT'S GONNA BE A BIG DEAL"

37 ROCKSTAR

Whatever Rockstar Games does next, it's gonna be a big deal. Whether it's a PS4 version of *Grand Theft Auto V* (make this happen, please), *Red Dead Redemption 2* (this too) or even *Rockstar Table Tennis 2* (this one, not so much), it's going to be *huge*. With games as ambitious as Rockstar's, you'll want to play them on the most powerful console possible.

38 BUNGIE



One of our favourite developers has finally made the jump to our console of choice, and there is much rejoicing. Bungie may have left *Halo* behind, but the team has moved on to bigger and better things, if *Destiny* is even half as good as it looks. Arguably our most anticipated game, bar none, Bungie makes FPS games unlike no other studio can, and now it's multiplatform, we can all share in the glory.

39 FROM SOFTWARE

From's track record is all over the place, considering it makes both the incredible *Souls* series and the mediocre *Armored Core*, among others. PS4 *Souls* and a sequel to accidental gem *Ninja Blade*, please.

40 ARC SYSTEM WORKS

Sony platforms are the only places to play most of Arc System Works' anime fighters, from *Guilty Gear* to *BlazBlue* via a bit of *Persona 4 Arena*. If *Street Fighter* is a bit too plain for you, give these guys a try.

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IOUT NOW

41 INFAMOUS: SECOND SON

The best open-world superhero game on PS4 (also, the only one except *Lego Marvel Super Heroes*) is a great example of just what the console can do. It's very pretty.

42 FINAL FANTASY XIV

For our money, the best MMO on PS4 (for now, at least), *Final Fantasy XIV* might seem archaic in still having a subscription system in this day and age, but it's well worth the money. It was great on PS3, and now the PS4 version has helped *FFXIV* achieve its full potential on console, with graphics comparable to the PC version.

43 KILLZONE SHADOW FALL

Speaking of pretty games, *Killzone* is arguably the best-looking console game of all time... at the moment. Things are only going to get better! Multiplayer is excellent, too.

44 MERCENARY KINGS

The "*Metal Slug* crossed with *Monster Hunter*" description has been tossed around, but that's because it perfectly describes *Mercenary Kings*. And if that doesn't sound ace to you, check yourself.

45 FEZ

It might have taken the best part of forever to hit PlayStation, but a game as good as *Fez* is always worth the wait. Few games have the power to melt your brain quite like this one.

46 ASSASSIN'S CREED IV

Perhaps the most unexpected reversal of quality after the naff *ACIII*, *Black Flag* is arguably the best pirate game we've ever played. Some of those sea shanties will never leave your brain.

47 BATTLEFIELD 4

The first *Battlefield* game on console to really offer a comparable experience to that on a super-powered PC, *Battlefield 4* is our modern warfare FPS of choice on PS4.

48 NBA 2K14

Production Editor Steve can't stop going on about the shorts in *2K14*, and more specifically, the way they flap around. Never mind that it's a great basketball game, it's got amazing shorts physics.

49 RESOGUN

At the time of launch, the best game on PS4 wasn't a hyped-up triple-A title but a side-scrolling shooter from a small indie team that was free on PS Plus. *Resogun* is so good that we still love it now, months later. Housemarque is gearing up to make its next smash hit, but in the meantime we have *Resogun* to tide us over.

50 METAL GEAR SOLID V: GROUND ZEROES

Don't believe the hype: *Ground Zeroes* isn't a £25 demo and it isn't two hours long. It's a great game that serves as both an introduction to the plot of *MGSV: The Phantom Pain* and a wonderful open-world stealth sandbox in its own right. For the first time in *MGS*, the gameplay has taken priority over the story. Traditionalists might not like it, but when it's this much fun to play, you've got to believe they'll come around.

UPGRADES

51 THE LAST OF US

The best game Naughty Dog has ever made gets another chance to shine, and we are happy for it. Some might not want to buy the game all over again, but that's fine – after all, you don't have to. Besides, Naughty Dog and Sony are apparently looking into cut-price upgrade options for those who already own the PlayStation 3 version. We can't wait to play *The Last Of Us* again, this time looking even prettier than it already did.

52 GTA V

This one's just speculative for now, but we still think a PS4 version of *Grand Theft Auto V* is going to happen in the near future. It would make far too much money for Rockstar to not consider it, and any effort taken in making such a port would be more than rewarded with piles and piles (and piles) of money. Make it happen, oh great Rockstar overlords.

53 TOMB RAIDER

If you've yet to play last year's outstanding *Tomb Raider* reboot, the definitive edition on PS4 is your best option. It's got the best hair physics.

54 MLB 14: THE SHOW

This year's baseball game looks amazing on PS4. Due to coming out on PS3 earlier, you'll be able to upgrade to the PS4 version for a reduced price.

55 MINECRAFT

It's *Minecraft*! It'll be pretty much the same on PS4 as any other console, but the mere fact it's finally on PlayStation after so long is cause enough to celebrate.

56 METRO

A compilation of both *Metro* games, now the dank, grimy underground can look better on ever on PS4! It's still mostly grey, though.

57 GUACAMELEE!

A great Metroidvania-style platformer on Vita and PS3, the jump to PS4 isn't going to change much but will give more gamers a chance to experience an excellent and original game.

58 OLLIOLLI

In case you missed it on Vita, Roll7's awesome 2D skateboarding arcade game is coming to PS4. It's gonna look pretty much the same, but now you can play it on a massive TV!

59 INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

Just in case the superheroes in the PS3 version weren't shiny enough for you, the PS4 version has you covered. It also contains all the DLC and a bunch of extra bits and bobs to boot. If you've ever wondered if Batman could beat Superman, now's your chance.

60 FIFA 14

The difference between the current and last-gen versions is pretty staggering. The PS4 version runs on a new engine and plays noticeably differently, as well as looking far prettier.

EXCLUSIVES

61 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Is *The Last Guardian* ever coming out? We don't know, but if it is, it will be on PS4. It's the only real option left at the moment, but that only matters if the game is ever released. In development at Team Ico for over seven years now, is there any way that *The Last Guardian* can live up to the hype?

62 THE ORDER: 1886

Coming from Ready At Dawn is a third-person shooter set in an alternate history London, with demons and monsters running amok and only the Knights of the Round Table capable of stopping them. With railguns. Yeah, it doesn't sound much like the history lessons we remember either. There's still a lot to learn about *The Order: 1886*, so hopefully E3 will provide us with a healthy serving of new information...

63 HOHOKUM

Colours! Music! Weird magical snake things flying around empty space and picking up stuff! What's going on? We don't know, but it looks great.

64 - EVERQUEST NEXT

The most revolutionary MMO in development at the moment, *EverQuest Next* seems to be promising huge changes. We can't wait for this.

65 DRIVECLUB

Driveclub is still a thing, apparently, and it will still be free on PS Plus when it launches in October. Can't complain about a free racing game, right?

66 RIME

A beautiful cel-shaded third-person adventure game, *Rime* reminds us of *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*. This is a very good thing.

67 SHADOW OF THE BEAST

A remake of an Amiga side-scroller, exclusively for PS4? Maybe not what you'd expect, but exciting nonetheless for fans of the original.

68 PLANETSIDE 2

The best MMOFPS around (until *Destiny*), Sony's own *PlanetSide 2* is a great game for people who are a bit bored of *Call Of Duty*.

69 HELLDIVERS

A co-op top-down shooter that looks set to scratch our collective arcade itches. It should be out soon, with CrossPlay across three platforms.

"WHATEVER HAPPENS, IT'S WORTH GETTING EXCITED ABOUT"

70 UNCHARTED

We'll inevitably see more of the new *Uncharted* game at E3. Will it be a straight sequel, continuing Drake's adventures? A prequel, perhaps?

Or a spinoff, with a new character learning from Drake and continuing in his footsteps? Whatever happens, it's worth getting excited about.

COMING SOON

71 THE EVIL WITHIN

Shinji Mikami returns to the genre that he made famous with a game that looks quite a lot like *Resident Evil 4*. That isn't a bad thing.

72 MAD MAX

The time for a *Mad Max* game might have passed, as many gamers weren't even alive when the first film was released. Still, for fans it's an exciting proposition.

73 KINGDOM UNDER FIRE II

Like *Dynasty Warriors*, but bigger and with huge monsters as well. Sounds awesome, right? It's been in development for ages, but is now set for PS4.

74 TRANSISTOR

Beautiful indie action from the team that made *Bastion*? Yes please. A mixture of turn-based and real-time action, it should be landing on PS4 any day now.

75 SKYLANDERS

If you have children, odds are they like *Skylanders*. Of course, some adults like it too... in particular, some magazine writers who haven't grown up yet...

76 THE DIVISION

Tom Clancy lives on in one of the best-looking games on the radar at the moment. A mixture of third-person shooter, MMO and RPG, this is one to watch.

77 SNIPER ELITE III

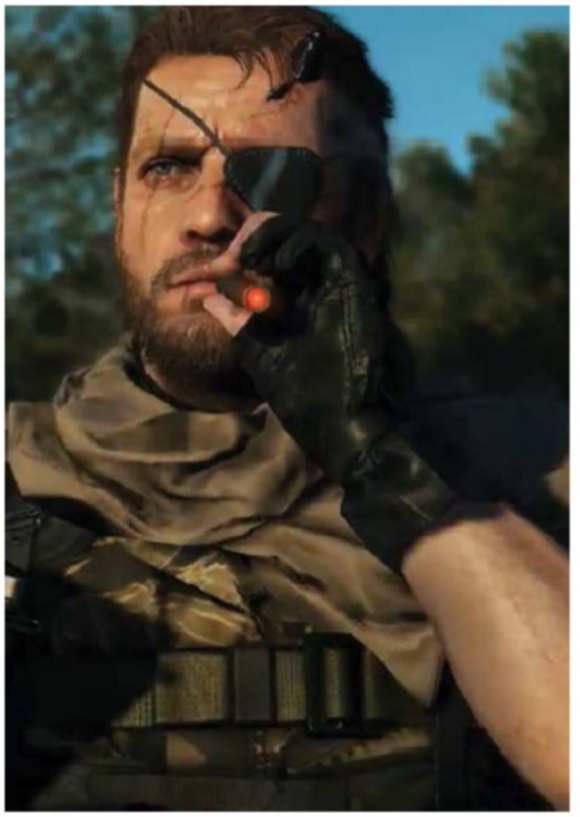
No game has ever shown the horrific repercussions of a bullet like *Sniper Elite*, and this time you get all the horrific carnage in sunny Africa. Holiday!

78 ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY

This year's *Assassin's Creed* is set during the French Revolution. Looks like PS3 will be getting a totally different game, which is good news.

79 THE WITCHER 3

Our most anticipated RPG, *The Witcher 3* comes from the masters at CD Projekt RED. It's been a while, but it's all going to be worth it.



80 METAL GEAR SOLID V THE PHANTOM PAIN

If *Ground Zeroes* is the starter, *The Phantom Pain* is the main course. If you haven't seen the nine-minute trailer from last year's E3 (aka, the best trailer ever made), go do so and you'll understand how and why we are so excited. Now we know it's going to play wonderfully, we are fully convinced that this could be the best *MGS* yet.

81 BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

The final entry in the *Arkham* trilogy (*Arkham Origins* doesn't count) gives us a bigger Gotham than ever and an awesome Batmoblie to explore it in. Only coming to the new breed of consoles, Rocksteady seems to be creating a fitting end to a wonderful series of games.

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82 DESTINY

Our most anticipated game, *Destiny* is a mixture of FPS and MMO from the makers of *Halo* that has the potential to be incredible. If *Destiny* lives up to all its promises – and we have no reason to believe it won't – we might never need to buy another game again.

83 THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

Like *Skyrim*, but now with loads of annoying kids named after *Game Of Thrones* characters stealing all your kills and calling you horrible names.

84 KINGDOM COME: DELIVERANCE

A realistic RPG, *Kingdom Come* is set in the real-world 15th century and looks awesome. Interesting that removing elements actually makes it more original.

85 MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR

The fighting mechanics of *Batman*, the movement of *Assassin's Creed* and the setting of *Lord Of The Rings* combine to create *Shadow Of Mordor*.

86 EVOLVE

Four humans against one monster in multiplayer mayhem. Doesn't sound particularly fair, but we trust the Left 4 Dead team to strike an even balance.

87 KINGDOM HEARTS III

A lot of people have been waiting a long time for this one. We haven't seen Sora, Goofy and pals since the PS2 days (if we ignore the HD re-releases and all the handheld stuff) and their return is long overdue.

"WE MIGHT NEVER NEED TO BUY ANOTHER GAME AGAIN"

88 FINAL FANTASY XV

The game formally known as *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* (which, let's be honest, was a dumb name) is reborn as the incredible looking *Final Fantasy XV*. Play as emo-haired Noctis and his emo-haired pals as they fight emo-haired enemies with a variety of giant swords and guns. *Lightning Returns* seems to have been a proof of concept for the action-heavy combat.

89 EA SPORTS UFC

EA steps up to have another try at two people kicking the shit out of each other. *Fight Night* was ace, so we are hoping this will be similarly great.

90 MIRROR'S EDGE

We loved *Mirror's Edge*, despite its flaws. A sequel on PS4 is a dream come true, as we never thought it'd happen after the first didn't sell particularly well.

91 DYING LIGHT

Like *Mirror's Edge* but with zombies, made by the people that did *Dead Island*. That's *Dying Light* in a sentence, and it sounds pretty great to us.

92 GUILTY GEAR

The best-looking fighting game we've ever seen, *Guilty Gear Xrd –SIGN–* has 3D models that look more hand-drawn than many 2D games.

93 DEEP DOWN

A free-to-play dungeon crawler from Capcom that looks similar to *Dark Souls*, in a good way. Exclusive to PS4, it runs on the new Panta Rhei engine.

94 STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

DICE is making a *Star Wars Battlefront* game. A sentence that for years we hoped and dreamed we could write has finally become reality. Considering *Battlefront* began as a heavy pastiche of DICE's *Battlefield* series, seeing things come full circle this way is amazing. We can't wait.

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"A FIRST-PERSON SURVIVAL-HORROR WITH NEXT TO NO COMBAT"

95 ALIEN: ISOLATION

The *Alien* game we've always wanted: a first-person survival-horror with next to no combat. A single huge alien stalks you, and your only option is to flee and hide. It sounds amazing, but why has it taken this long for people to realise this is what we've wanted all this time?

96 CALL OF DUTY: ADVANCED WARFARE

Who saw this coming? The new *COD* is set in the future (*Titanfall*, anyone?) and stars Kevin Spacey. Developed by Sledgehammer Games, *Advanced Warfare* could be the kick up the bum that the series has needed for a few years now. It's got hoverbikes, and everything with hoverbikes is automatically a bit better than it otherwise would be.

INEVITABLE

97 FIFA 15

FIFA 15 will be a thing that will happen, and it will come to PS4. Interestingly, we'll see *PES*'s PS4 debut this year, too. Expect reveals of both soon.

98 BORDERLANDS

The Pre-Sequel is coming to PS3, but it sounds like *Borderlands 3* could be in pre-production for PlayStation 4. It's a matter of when, not if...

99 DARK SOULS

After the success of the *Dark Souls* games, From Software would be silly not to make a third. By the time such a game would be ready, it would almost definitely be current-gen exclusive, gracing the PS4 with the same depressing beauty.

100 GOD OF WAR

We've not seen the last of *God Of War*, and while it may not be made by Sony Santa Monica, we think we'll see a PS4 entry in the series eventually.

101 GRAN TURISMO

Gran Turismo is one of Sony's biggest franchises, and we can't wait to see how good it will look on PS4. *Driveclub* has its work cut out if it wants to become the primary exclusive racer on PS4.

CLASS OF 2014

Four new characters offer entirely new ways to play, plus more will likely be added later.

STOCK, BARREL, GRIP

The series' procedural weapon generation system returns, creating guns at random from huge pools of possible parts. Now with added lasers!

"WE'RE GONNA SEE A SIDE OF THE BORDERLANDS UNIVERSE THAT WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE"

ETA Q3 2014 | **DEV** GEARBOX/2K AUSTRALIA | **PUB** 2K GAMES | **TWITTER** @DUVALMAGIC

Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel

Yes, it's actually called that...

PS3

HAVING APPARENTLY HIT the ceiling of how much DLC can be added to *Borderlands 2*, we guess it's no great surprise that Gearbox should be looking to set up another platform to pile high with additional paid content. No, the surprises come elsewhere with *The Pre-Sequel* – in new developer 2K Australia (which is collaborating with Gearbox on the project), in the decision to stay on PS3 and in the team electing to do an interquel (as much as we hate the word, that's what it is) rather than *Borderlands 3* proper. It's similar to *Arkham Origins* in this regard, an outsourced last-gen stopgap while the main team readies the full-on sequel for PS4. But what a stopgap it looks to be...

This ain't no lazy filler game – it's a full-length, brand new *Borderlands* adventure ready to rob you of hundreds of hours all over again as you explore the cel-shaded sci-fi universe in the vain hope of ever working out which of the game's trillions of guns is the best. The action has been moved away from the awesome wastelands of Pandora, but it hasn't gone too far, as series producer Randy Pitchford explains. "One of the things that has been kind of taunting us as we've played through all of the *Borderlands* games is the moon," he reminds us. "It's always been up there in the sky above Pandora, along with that moon base. And we're finally gonna get to go up there, and we're gonna see a side of the *Borderlands* universe that we've never seen before."

Not that we've ever been to one, but moons typically tend to be pretty boring places. Thankfully, Pandora's moon bucks that trend and offers the same kind of variety in its environments as the surface below, with the team also hinting that there'll be other locations in the game besides the moon and that giant floating metal 'H' – given that we've encountered all of its playable characters before down on the surface of Pandora, it makes sense that we'd end up back on familiar soil at some point.

Yes, you read that right. *The Pre-Sequel*'s four new playable classes are all legacy characters who should be familiar to anyone who has played through both games and some DLC. Most of the focus so far has been put on Athena, a Crimson Lance assassin who first appeared in the original game's Secret Armoury Of General Knoxx expansion. She looks to be the game's tank class, with her active ability allowing her to whip out an awesome shield that absorbs all frontal damage – the shield can be tossed either when the ability runs out or manually at any time to deal double the damage it absorbed to a single target and cools down incredibly quickly, giving her almost impenetrable defences *and* a

△○✕□ Low-gravity environments have a real impact on gameplay, forcing you to adapt or die on the fly.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a whole lot more of that wonderful *Borderlands* shooting and looting.
- Turn the tables and play as the bad guys to set up the events of *Borderlands 2*.
- At long last, we finally get to go up to the Hyperion moon base!
- New weapon types means billions more procedurally generated guns.

powerful single target attack – effectively two active skills for the price of one.

The other three aren't being shown off to quite the same degree just yet – 2K needs some things to tease us with over the rest of the year, of course. Still, we do at least know *who* they are, so that's something. First up is Wilhelm, the hulking mech boss from *Borderlands 2*. But before you get too excited, this all takes place before the events of that game, so Wilhelm isn't quite that metal just yet. He's a cyborg, sure, and Randy Pitchford suggested that he'll get more robotic as he levels up but how far that'll go will have to remain to be seen – we'd play him for his spectacular hair/beard combo alone, but the prospect of transforming into a giant stomping robot via a Gamechanger skill at the foot of one of his skill trees (like Krieg's Ultra Badass transformation) is something that could be straight-up awesome.

As for the remaining two, there's Nisha, a Lawbringer who we first met as the Sheriff of Lynchwood in *Borderlands 2* and finally, Claptrap will make his playable debut. Yes, really. Sadly, the team isn't saying too much about their abilities just yet, but Nisha's romantic ties to Handsome Jack in *Borderlands 2* and Claptrap's reported Fragtrap upgrades and cool beret have us excited all the same. We loved the Law pistol/Order shield combo in *Borderlands 2* (which basically offered a huge melee buff while making bayonet swipes heal you... perfect for ninja Zer0 and bruiser Krieg builds), so hopefully these elements will be worked into Nisha's skill trees, plus what's not to like about getting a bit closer to the ground and screaming around as Claptrap? We're not entirely sure how the team plans to overcome his famous aversion to stairs, though.

> "THERE ARE FEWER XBOX ONES AND PS4S OUT THERE THAN WE SOLD COPIES OF BORDERLANDS 2"

While some may scoff at the decision to bring in a new development team, Pitchford justifies the decision pretty well. "We love it – we love spending time in *Borderlands* but the truth is that we did at some point have to start dedicating our attention to developing new things, to the future," he tells us. "And that cut into our ability to tend to this franchise we had created." As is often the case, 2K Australia isn't deviating far from the tried and tested basics of *Borderlands 2* – it runs on a refined version of the engine and aside from a few neat additions, the action is all familiar. Which, of course, is a good thing indeed.

But why is it only on PS3 and not on the new generation of hardware? Again, Pitchford is quick to offer his thoughts on the subject. "I don't think it'd be a stretch to say that there's a lot of demand for a new *Borderlands*," he reasons. "And if you imagine where that demand lives, it lives on Xbox 360, PS3 and PC. We don't know to what extent it'll live on next-gen. I imagine by the time we get to third or fourth Christmas there'll be enough of an install base. Currently there are probably close to 170 million installed units of PS3 and 360 worldwide – there are fewer Xbox Ones and PS4s out there than we sold copies of *Borderlands 2*."

Reading between the lines, it's safe to assume that there *will* be a *Borderlands 3* down the line, it *will* be by Gearbox and it *will* be a PS4 game – just like *Arkham Knight*, this is the game designed to entertain us until such a day that Gearbox is ready to show its hand on that front. Given that we're still playing *Borderlands 2* today (especially now it's on Vita) and that the guys are promising this will be every bit as much of a time-sink, ongoing DLC

△○×□ Athena's damage absorption ability looks incredibly useful. We can't wait to get our tank on...

support and additions could offer *The Pre-Sequel* every bit as much longevity, effectively buying Gearbox a good couple of years to clear its slate and move onto full-time development of the main event. One thing's for sure, though – given how much money *Borderlands* makes for 2K, we're not nearly done trading bullets for loot just yet.

"It's been wild," Pitchford smiles. "When I first thought about combining loot-style RPGs with shooters, obviously I hoped and believed that it would work. But I had no idea how big *Borderlands* would become. Take Two just did their last quarterly earning report and they revealed that *Borderlands 2* has just become the best-selling game in 2K Games history. That's pretty amazing, and I'm obviously very pleased with that. Demand from fans has been unfathomable and we've done a lot to try and serve that demand. We've created more DLC for *Borderlands 2* than anything we've ever done before and I can't think of any other game in the industry that has had as much additional content added post-launch. But that said, we still haven't met that demand."

Luke Albigés

BORDERLANDS: THE PRE-SEQUEL is exploding onto PS3 later this year. Find out more at **borderlandsthegame.com**

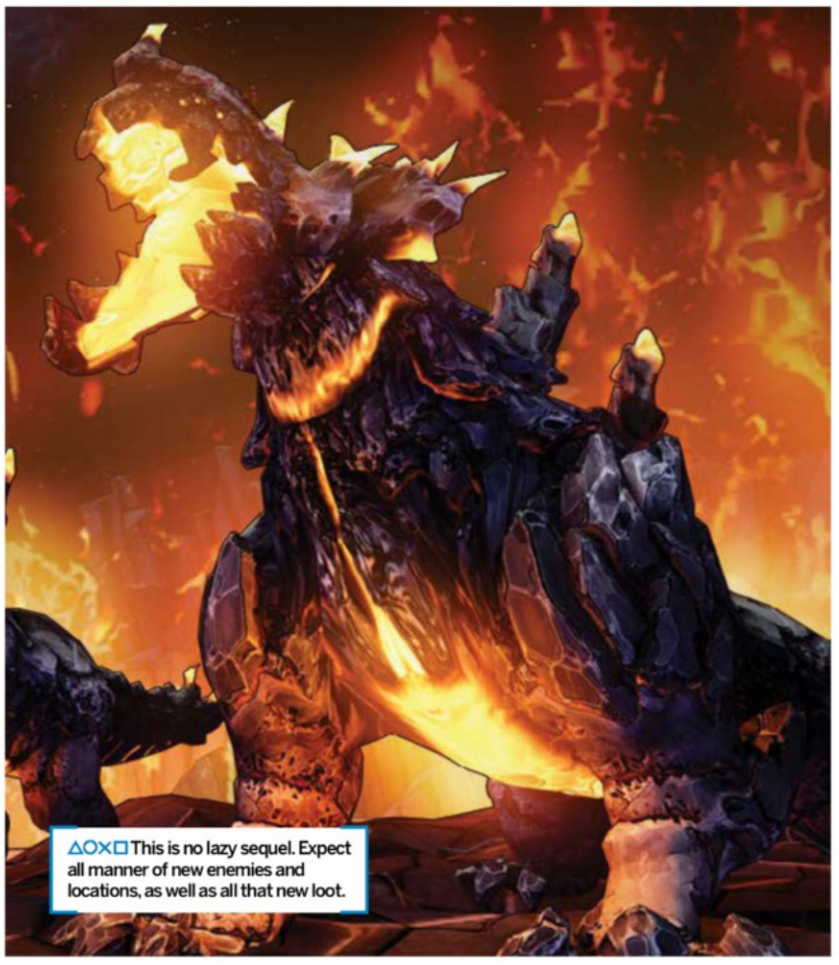
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

Any borderlands is a good borderlands...never bothered about exclusives, never change allegiances anyway... looking forward to vita version of borderlands 2...
Antony Cairns

Ditto the above, couldn't be happier!
Steven Allan

YouTube CAN NOT WAIT!!!! whats the date its expected to come out??? also i reckon they should do something with kreig in the moon base how sick would that be?
RoflCopter MLGK

YouTube Looks like the moon-base dlc everybody wanted i think i'l wait until the 543 dlc's have come out for it.
ukarlu



△○×□ This is no lazy sequel. Expect all manner of new enemies and locations, as well as all that new loot.

ETA 10 OCTOBER | **DEV** TOYS FOR BOB | **PUB** ACTIVISION | **TWITTER** @SKYLANDERSGAME

Skylanders: Trap Team

Gotta catch 'em all

PS4

ALSO COMING TO PS3

IT'S NO GREAT surprise that *Skylanders* doesn't exactly get the respect that a billion-dollar franchise perhaps should, and the reasons are many. There's the design for one, the cartoon visuals making it perfectly clear that this is a game aimed at kids. There's the model, which the cynical find all too easy to write off as a shameless cash grab. There's the toys themselves, some finding it impossible to care about a game that revolves around playing with little plastic dragons. And there's the Activision angle – many detest the American super-publisher for its methods, which have seen amazing developers such as sent to the *Call Of Duty* map pack factory when their own, more interesting games underperformed.

But forget all that noise, cast your prejudice to one side and open your mind for a moment. It's time you gave *Skylanders* a chance. Because underneath all the garish colours and the business-minded approach, the *Skylanders* games are actually really good action-RPGs. With popularity so high, it'd be easy for Activision to fall into the common trap of just churning out more of the same. But that's not the case – each new iteration has introduced interesting new features that add just as much to gameplay as they do to the toy collection, and newly announced sequel *Trap Team* is no different.

Bringing toys to life has been a one-way process so far, with the figures placed on the Portal Of Power appearing in-game for you to take control of in saving the world from the maniacal Kaos (again, though he's excellently voiced by Richard 'Invader Zim' Horvitz, so we don't mind too much). This time, the Portal is a two-way affair – don't get any ideas about in-game characters coming to life in the real world via holograms or anything fancy like that, although that's exactly where our minds went when we first heard about the new Portal, and it's exactly where *Skylanders* most likely will go if and when technology allows. For now though, we'll just have to make do with the illusion of a two-way process, although returning developer Toys For Bob has done a fine job of making this convincing.

As well as the usual area on which to place Skylanders figures, the new Portal also has a slot for inserting the new trap models and a speaker built into it. Upon defeating a boss in the game, you're prompted to insert a trap into the Portal – the starter set comes with two, with the remaining six for the other elements available separately. Trapping a boss is where the *Trap Team* magic happens, and hearing their kicking and screaming cross over gradually from TV speakers to the one in the Portal itself is awesome; a novel use of tech that adults can enjoy (it's surprisingly well written) and kids will absolutely buy into. They even continue jabbering for as long as they remain trapped, commenting on the on-screen action or generally just begging to be let out every once in a while. It's brilliant.

"ONCE TRAPPED, BOSSES CAN BE USED EXACTLY LIKE REGULAR SKYLANDERS"

△○×□ New Skylander Food Fight is far more effective in a fight than you might expect a little sprout with a face to be. He comes with the Starter Pack, too.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The new Portal Of Power now works two ways, including capturing bosses in traps.
- A speaker in the Portal allows captured enemies to communicate with players.
- Full compatibility with all existing figures, with saved progress carrying over to the new game.
- Tag team gameplay, with the ability to switch between Skylanders and captured bosses.

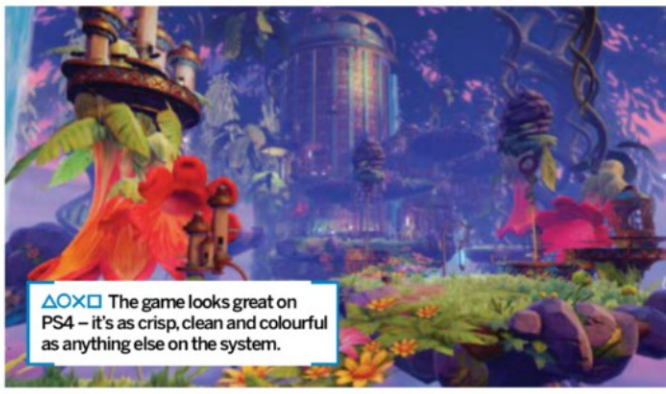
Once trapped, bosses can be used exactly like regular Skylanders and while their trap is in the Portal, you can freely switch between bad guys and Skylanders at the touch of a button – a first for the series and a real boon, as it allows easy access to two elements at once. Trapped foes will apparently also have their own upgrade paths and such just like the rest of the characters, though Toys For Bob remains tight-lipped on what differences we can expect to see between good and evil skill trees.

One factor that is still being tested and worked out is what happens to bosses if you don't have the relevant elemental trap to hand on defeating them. In the current build, these enemies are simply defeated and your chance to trap and play as them lost – each trap can capture every boss of the same element so doubling up on them isn't essential, but it sounds like you will need to shell out for the additional six trap types if you want access to the full roster of bad guys.

That right there is a perfect example of the kind of thing that makes it easy for people to look down their noses at *Skylanders* – it's a business-minded decision that locks away in-game content behind a pay-wall, after all. But as with any additional content, it's optional. We've seen from the series so far that value for money and longevity even with just a Starter Pack is never a concern, but with the games being as enjoyable as they are (especially in co-op), why wouldn't you want to add to your collection and open up more of the game? Think of the toys as real-world DLC, if that makes sense, and you'll probably have a much easier time convincing yourself that giving *Skylanders* a shot might not be the worst idea in the world. Because it isn't, and you definitely should.

Luke Albigés

The new **SKYLANDERS** are patiently waiting to bust out of their traps and portals, under the supervision of Toys For Bob. For more info, check out : **www.skylanders.com**



△○×□ The game looks great on PS4 – it's as crisp, clean and colourful as anything else on the system.

ETA Q3 2014 | **DEV** IVORY TOWER | **PUB** UBISOFT | **TWITTER** @THECREWGAME

The Crew

We're the kids in America

PS4

"YOUR CHARACTER IS your car," says Julian Gerighty, creative director of *The Crew*. It's a clichéd expression to use, and one we've heard numerous times when people are trying to sell their racing game, but we are more inclined to believe it when it comes to Ivory Tower's new open-world racer. Gerighty describes *The Crew* as an MMORPG with cars, and the game has been built around this structure.

Character classes, for example, are present, just not in the way you might usually expect. *The Crew* features a number of car specs, and while they may not be called Warrior, Mage and Thief, they serve essentially the same purpose. Cars will initially be a basic stock model, and as Gerighty explains, can be altered from there.

"You can take your stock car and transform it with different specs," says Gerighty. "We think of this almost like evolution in *Pokémon* games – in fact, we see *The Crew* as the *Pokémon* of car games. Your stock car is your level 1 Pokémon and the specs are the evolution.

"The first spec is called Street spec. This is all about street racing, with very tight cornering and good speeds. This is the car you'll probably be using the most, all in all."

Thing is, there is a lot more to *The Crew* than just street racing. The game is set in a condensed, distilled version of the USA, offering a huge variety of landmarks and environment types that will take a good 90 minutes to drive from one end to the other. Ahmed Boukhelifa, the COO of Ivory Tower, explains what led his team to create such a world.

"We wanted to have a proper road trip experience, so we obviously thought of the USA. So, how do we make that work and how do we make it interesting? Firstly, we set a rule where we always wanted to be at most two minutes away from something interesting. What we tried to do was 'how would I recreate the US and the transitions between different places' keeping it both realistic and authentic but fun at the same time. So we replicated real cities and places and maps and then started to patch them up and make some tweaks to make it more fun. The game does have actual locations with several real places and layouts. We have about 20 ecosystems and environments, about 1,000 landmarks across the US, just all compressed and brought together so it doesn't take days to get from one end to the other!"

Gerighty elaborates further. "We tried to get as many landmarks in the game as possible without things getting overcrowded," he explains. "That allows us to get as much variety as possible in the game, from snow-capped mountains to cities, to beachfront properties and so on. We found that

"WE SEE THE CREW AS THE POKÉMON OF CAR GAMES"

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PRIOR FORM

Need For Speed Rivals Another open-world racer, although not of quite the same scale. Still, it showcases some pretty neat social features, as *The Crew* promises to.

△○×□ You'll be able to customise paint jobs, body kits and such to create a vehicle truly unique to yourself.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- An MMORPG racing game, mixing genres like never before.
- Choose different 'classes' with various car specs to suit your driving style.
- Drive across all of America, seeing a variety of different environments and landmarks.
- Various types of cooperative and competitive multiplayer for constant challenge.

racing games often get a bit tiring as you are always seeing the same thing. The fact we have such different terrain and vehicles for every different type of terrain helps solve this problem."

The Crew is being developed exclusively for next-gen consoles and PC, and the results are clear to see: this is a very good-looking game. The Babel engine procedurally generates basic environments for the art team, allowing the designers to then build upon these frameworks and apply greater detail to each specific area. The result feels like a legitimate slice of America, albeit one distilled down to a 'greatest hits', delivering landmark after landmark in quick succession.

So, with more terrain than simple streets, it makes sense that you'll need cars suited for more than *Need For Speed*-style street racing. Gerighty continues explaining the car spec 'character classes' with the second of five.

"You've got a whole country to explore – there's more than just racing on streets," Gerighty says. "So you'll need off-road specs, the first one being Dirt. This is inspired by rally driving: lots of drifts, works well on dirt and okay on asphalt. This is the most adaptable car, good for exploration but decent on roads as well.

"Our third spec is Performance. Incredibly fast on asphalt, not good in terms of handling. This is a technical ride, less arcade-y than the Street spec. The handling and gameplay for these different specs is radically different, each one is a totally different experience.

△○×□ The scope and ambition of *The Crew* is larger perhaps than any other driving game. We hope Ivory Tower can pull it off.

"The fourth spec is my favourite," Gerighty continues. "It's called Raid and it's pure off-road. Raid is kind of our love letter to *Smuggler's Run*, an old PS2 off-road game by Rockstar. This is the one you want for going off-track completely, racing over bumpy hills and rough terrain. Finally, we have Circuit spec. This is literally a racecar, for people who want that pure, simulator-style driving experience. The handling is far more precise, and fans of more realistic racing games should enjoy it."

So, you've got your chosen car type, but what are you going to do with it? Gerighty is on hand to explain. "You've got skills and missions, two types of events. Skills are 20-40 second challenges, with hundreds of them around the country. From driving very fast with no collisions to slam events where you have to smash up the environment, every minute and a half you'll be running into a different Skill event.

"The missions are the narrative loop of the game, if you will. Different races, takedowns, outruns, all organised to take you on this road trip from Detroit, to New York, to Miami, finishing in Los Angeles. So they are the heart of the road trip around the States."

Gerighty is clearly very enthusiastic about *The Crew*, as once he gets talking, it's hard to stop him. "I haven't even begun to talk about personalisation

"WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF CONTENT TO KEEP YOU RACING IN AN EFFORT TO BE THE BEST OF THE BEST"

△○×□ *The Crew* is sort of PS4's first rally game...

or customisation yet," he continues. "Every one of these events rewards you with cash to buy vehicles and parts. They also give experience points that allow you to evolve and access different parts and customisations. Finally, they award you with parts. Each part increases you car's level in a certain way. Parts have rarities, just like items in an MMORPG. Your car is your character, and your character sheet is a cutaway of your car, seeing all your performance parts. They are basically your weapons and armour, your gear that makes your character better."

Just as Gerighty seems to be winding down, he keeps going. The man clearly loves cars. "The final major aspect of *The Crew* is the social element. I've reached that age where I have a daughter and I don't have as much time to play games as I used to, so I have to get up at 6am to play games. That's why the mode I'm the most interested in is our asynchronous multiplayer. Every Skill event we've talked about is an asynchronous challenge where you can leave a ghost to take on your friends. You can even take on the ghosts of the best in the world to challenge yourself. Otherwise, every mission is something you can play solo or cooperatively.

"On the other side of the coin we have player versus player, competitive multiplayer. PvP is incredibly important to any MMO, and we are supporting it with tons of different races and missions around the country. Don't worry, competitive players, we've got plenty of content to keep you racing in an effort to be the best of the best."

If you haven't heard of Ivory Tower, it's understandable, as this is the French studio's first game. That's no cause for alarm though, as these guys aren't amateurs. A large portion of the studio is made up of ex-members of Eden Games, the studio behind the excellent *Test Drive Unlimited* games, open-world racers that encourage exploration and always-online multiplayer. It's easy to see the evolution from *Test Drive* to *The Crew*. Ivory Tower also features staff that has worked on the *Need For Speed* and *V-Rally* series, so we trust it when it says it knows what it's doing.

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SHARE THIS

△○×□ The huge map takes about 90 minutes to traverse from end to end.

SPEED RACER

Showboating from coast to coast

The Share button was practically made for racing games. Show off your best racing lines, brag about your gold-medal track times, or just share a beautiful vista you found through adventurous exploring. There's also a ton of potential for sharing your unique car customisations, and with such a variety of parts available, you should be able to build some truly one-of-a-kind creations.

△○×□ We want a version set in the UK. Visit such exciting locales as Slough, Basingstoke and Milton Keynes!

Gerighty wraps things up by bringing everything full circle. "All of these things – racing, upgrading your car, challenging your friends – are important, but the heart of this game is something other racing games just don't do. Ivory Tower proved in *Test Drive* that we understand the pleasure of exploring. Just driving around exploring the country is unique to this game and truly enjoyable. Driving around the world for the sake of it might sound dull in another racing game, but in *The Crew* we aim to make it exciting. So we have five main ways to play: solo, asynchronous, co-op, competitive and free drive."

It's rare to find a racing game that is truly doing something new while still appealing to the street-racing fans that enjoy *Burnout* and the like. *The Crew* seems to mix the best of those franchises with the best of the *Test Drive Unlimited* games to create something that could be very, very good.

Sam Smith

THE CREW is being tuned up by Ivory Tower. Check the website for more details: **thecrew-game.ubi.com**

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

To me #thecrew seem to be the game Need For Speed used to be but a bit more exciting, with a bit of Motorstorm thrown in.
@azzagodfrey

I like the idea of building your own car through an app for your phone. They've taken the GTA 5 'LSC' app a lot further!substitution plus the mechanics sound interesting
@Abrown66544

I would rate it an Internet score of 8, looks so-so.
@MrWrighty987

It lacks a catchy hashtag like #DRIVECLUB so it probably isn't very good.
Paul Durie

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Race and class customisation offers more freedom than in many MMOs.
- The world itself is huge, even if action is a little more channeled than in the main series.
- Large-scale PvP pits the three factions against one another in epic siege battles.
- The franchise's legacy means that the servers will be nice and busy for months to come.

△○×□ If you'd rather take on other players than AI enemies, PvP arenas open up shortly into the game. Lower level players may struggle, but it's certainly something to work towards...

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ETA JUNE | **DEV** ZENIMAX ONLINE STUDIOS | **PUB** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS | **TWITTER** @TESONLINE

The Elder Scrolls Online

"I used to be an adventurer like you..."

PS4

MUCH LIKE THE people who continue to bankroll Michael Bay *Transformers* movies, we're starting to think that Bethesda maybe asked the wrong questions going into this project – it's not a case of *can* this be done, rather a question of whether or not it *should*. The more we see of *The Elder Scrolls Online* now that it's out in the wild on PC, the more it seems to fly in the face of everything that makes *Skyrim* and *Oblivion* great. And with the console release now just weeks away, it seems unlikely that what will find its way onto PS4 will be that much different from what we've already found to be a little disappointing on PC.

The sense of scale is the first hurdle at which *TESO* stumbles. *Elder Scrolls* games are famous for that moment where the size of the world first becomes apparent and you're made to feel like an ant – emerging from *Oblivion*'s opening dungeon to be confronted with sprawling fields and rolling hills was incredible, with *Skyrim* offering much the same sensation after its scripted opening. Here, though, even though the world itself is actually much larger than those games, an MMO needs to funnel players through training grounds and exposition relevant to their characters and experience, making for a naturally more enclosed, linear experience until much later in the game.

Much of the usual immersion is lost too, thanks to a number of issues that MMO structure presents. The choice between first- and third-person viewpoints returns, but it's sadly the latter that works better from a gameplay perspective. Seeing the world through your character's eyes is more involving but without perfect communication, the limited field of vision is just more likely to get you and your team killed (especially with analog stick control on console rather than the speed of a mouse) than the somewhat clumsy third-person viewpoint. Having huge groups of adventurers explore caves and public areas at once is similarly jarring, especially after so much solo spelunking in the older games. We'll get used to it – instanced areas probably wouldn't fare much better in terms of preserving the sense of adventure, so it's just an issue with the genre itself more than anything else.

We're still not entirely sold on the combat mechanics, either – it's an odd fusion of the franchise's usual action-led spell slinging and trigger slapping with MMO cooldown management and, so far, it hasn't engaged us nearly as much as purer versions of the two pools from which the hybrid system draws.

No MMO has ever launched without its fair share of issues and we're sure as the game grows and evolves we'll develop more of an understanding of how and why it does the things it does, learn to love the game's idiosyncrasies rather than judge them unfavourably against elements of other, more established MMOs. *Final Fantasy XIV*'s subscription fee was a no-brainer, as the game was a proven success by the time it arrived on PlayStation 4. Here, though, it might well be worth holding fire until the stormy skies over Skyrim calm down a little.

Luke Albigés

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE is currently grinding away under ZeniMax Online Studios' watch. For more info, march over to **www.elderscrollsonline.com**

PRIOR FORM

Sniper Elite V2 It was flawed, but we quite enjoyed *Sniper Elite V2* nonetheless. The amazing killcams definitely helped the game make a name for itself.

ETA 27 JUNE | **DEV** REBELLION | **PUB** 505 GAMES | **TWITTER** @SNIPERELITE

Sniper Elite III

I bless the rains down in Africa

PS4

ALSO COMING TO PS3

BEING A SNIPER is hard. That's the message we took away from our time with *Sniper Elite III*, which frequently saw us surrounded and gunned down by angry Nazis, our position given away but some ill-judged shooting. Play it well, and *Sniper Elite III* lets you move from position to position unseen, taking down foes from afar without ever being discovered. Play it like us and you tend to get shot. Like, a lot.

Sniper Elite III is a big departure for the series, taking place on the dusty plains of Africa rather than the ruined buildings of Berlin. Levels are now huge open-world affairs, a massive difference from the confined, linear spaces of *V2*. The open stages and freedom to complete objectives gives the whole game a different feel, and scanning the environment and planning your approach is suddenly a huge matter of importance.

Players can tag enemies with binoculars in a manner similar to many modern games, but can only mark eight at once – a smart twist to stop you knowing the position of every bad guy on the stage. A key new mechanic is 'relocation'. Sniper rifles are noisy, and unless you manage to mask your shot (more on that later), remaining enemies will search for you afterwards. The minimap displays the 'danger zone', and escaping from it unseen will see a "Relocation Successful" message. Set up shop elsewhere, take some more shots and move once more – it's the life of a sniper. Getting caught will often lead to close-range firefights, and although you have submachine guns and other weapons to help fight your way out, you are no Rambo, and a couple of shots is all it will take to drop you.

To help avoid detection, it's possible to mask

△○×□ The African front is a setting not often explored in WW2 games, so it's a nice change of pace that allows for some beautiful scenery.

△○×□ The game coming to PS4 as well as PS3 is a nice bonus, and it looks extremely pretty on the new console.

"BULLETS BURST EYEBALLS, SHATTER SKULLS AND RUPTURE TESTICLES, ALL IN HORRIBLY LUCID DETAIL"

△○×□ Sniping is cool, but basing a whole game around it has proven difficult in the past. *Sniper Elite III* could be the best yet.

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△○×□ Shooting someone in the happysacks feels so wrong, yet so, so right. There is something wrong with us.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ Snipe Nazis in beautiful Africa.
- □ New, open-world level design leads to unpredictable gameplay.
- × Gory, slow-motion killcams are back.
- ○ Relocation stealth mechanics encourage a shoot and move strategy.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

It wouldn't be a *Sniper Elite* game without the chance to shoot Hitler in the face, and *Sniper Elite III* delivers. Despite being set in 1942, pre-ordering the game will get you a free DLC mission to take down Hitler as he visits Africa. Players will have to scope out Hitler and his double, decide which is the real one and make the shot. We aren't too sure this is how it happened in real life, but any opportunity to take out Hitler is alright with us.

your shots with other noises. Some of these you'll have to cause yourself, such as tampering with a generator and firing when it overloads. Others, like a German team test firing an artillery gun, will happen automatically – you just have to make sure you fire at the right time.

If it sounds simple, trust us when we say it isn't. The open map design means enemies can catch you unawares from any angle, and managing to escape undetected after taking some shots normally requires planning out your route beforehand. This isn't *Doom*: casual blasting won't get you far. *Sniper Elite III* will reward fans of a more strategic play-style who do their best to actually snipe their way through, rather than fall back on the standard SMG.

There is a reward for good sniping, of course: the famous killcam. If you've played the last game, you know the deal – a slow-motion zoom in as your bullet penetrates the enemy, tearing flesh, bone and organs apart in full gory detail. You can argue about the ethics of it all day, but you can't deny how entertaining it is. Bullets burst eyeballs, shatter skulls and rupture testicles, all in horribly lucid detail. Sensitive types can turn the feature off, but seeing as it's one of the main draws of the series, doing so seems a shame.

Sniper Elite III isn't exactly a simulator, but it still requires more skill than pointing and shooting. Bullets drop over distance, so accounting for such, as well as wind speed and direction, is necessary to make long shots. Holding your breath steadies your aim as well as giving you an indicator of where exactly to point to make a shot, but you can't do so for long.

Despite being far too linear and not particularly varied, we enjoyed *Sniper Elite V2*, and *Sniper Elite III* seems to be fixing all of the problems we had with it. An open-world design with tighter stealth mechanics and a new setting could make *Sniper Elite III* one of the sleeper hits of the summer.

Sam Smith

SNIPER ELITE III is being developed by Rebellion. Scope out the website for more details:
www.rebellion.co.uk/games/sniper-elite-3

ANATOMY OF... NATHAN DRAKE

A new Uncharted is on the way, and while we know next to nothing about it, odds are it will star series protagonist, Nathan Drake. Let's get up to speed with the rugged treasure hunter who seems to take inspiration from a certain Doctor Jones...

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Nathan was not born a Drake. After his mother committed suicide, his father handed him over to the state and Nate was raised in a Catholic orphanage from five years old. Eventually running away, a 15-year-old Nate travels to Colombia and steals Francis Drake's ring from a museum, taking the name for his own.

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Many adventures follow, and Drake eventually meets reporter Elena Fisher while searching for the fabled city of El Dorado. They have a tempestuous relationship, eventually marrying before becoming estranged. The two eventually reconcile by the end of *Uncharted 3*: all it takes to save a relationship is a near-death experience.

NINJA SKILLS

Considering Naughty Dog designed Drake to be an 'everyman' that the average player could relate to, he sure seems to kill a lot of people. Nate is skilled and experienced with a multitude of weapons. The guy is also a ninja, scaling ancient ruins with ease. The disconnect between persona and actions is jarring, but *Uncharted* isn't a particularly serious franchise.

THE FABLED HALF-TUCK

Arguably the most memorable aspect of Drake's design is his legendary 'half-tuck' style of dress, tucking one half of his shirt into his jeans. This precarious tucking situation never changes, despite repeated explosions, falls and gunfights. Either Drake is sticking his shirt in with superglue or he has discovered the tuck singularity.

ETA TBC | **DEV** NAUGHTY DOG | **PUB** SONY | **TWITTER** @NAUGHTY_DOG

Uncharted PS4

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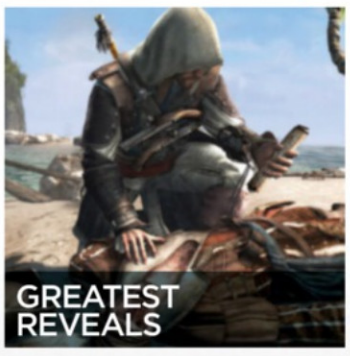

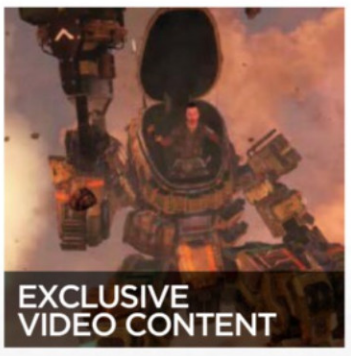

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△○×□ Isometric RPGs like *Sacred* don't tend to look great in screenshots, but graphics are never the main selling point of a game like this.

ETA 22 AUGUST | **DEV** KEEN GAMES | **PUB** DEEP SILVER | **TWITTER** @SACRED_WORLD

Sacred 3

Diablo's holier, uglier and less popular cousin

PS3 ALSO COMING TO VITA

IT MUST BE tough to be *Sacred 3* in a post-*Diablo III* world. While previously the *Sacred* series may have had near-exclusive rights to the action-RPG-on-console niche, Blizzard's dungeon-crawling smash making the jump to PS3 and PS4 has put an end to that. Now, *Sacred* is very much the B-tier franchise on both PC and console, similar to *Diablo* but with nowhere near as much recognition.

It didn't stop *Sacred 2* from being an enjoyable, if average, blast of action-RPG fun, especially considering the sub-genre is so underrepresented on console. Of course, the thing we remember most from *Sacred 2* was the involvement of German power metal band Blind Guardian, but that isn't a slight on the game – we just really like Blind Guardian.

Ascaron Entertainment, the team behind the first two *Sacred* games, has ceased to be in the time between titles. Publisher Deep Silver bought the rights and passed the next game on to Keen Games, developer of such 'hits' as... *G-Force* and *What's Cooking With Jamie Oliver*. Blizzard, it ain't.

Still, the core gameplay of *Sacred 3* seems largely unchanged. If you've played *Diablo*, you'll know what to expect: a top-down viewpoint, a fantasy hero that falls into one of five classes, a bunch of dungeons to explore and clear out and lots (and lots) of loot. There are some changes though, a couple of which seem to be proving both important and controversial among existing fans.

Gone is the open world featured in the first two *Sacred* games, replaced with a series of stages to battle through. It's a change that has earned some ire among fans, as the vast, immediately explorable open world of *Sacred 2* was one of the game's best features. A more streamlined approach might seem like a backstep to some, but it seems to have been a decision made to support the other big change: constant co-op.

Sacred 3 is developed around online co-op, with the player constantly accompanied by three teammates. Even if you are not playing online, your partners will be controlled by the AI – either way, you've got company. Perhaps unsurprisingly, fans don't seem to be too happy about this change either. One of the appeals of a good dungeon crawler is

PRIOR FORM

Sacred 2 A surprisingly fun if very much B-tier action-RPG and one of the few decent examples of the genre on console. Plus, it has Blind Guardian in it.

△○×□ Blind Guardian aren't back, so why not replace them with another metal band? Cannibal Corpse, anyone?

IS NOTHING SACRED?

Die hard fans on the Sacred forums have had a lot to say about the new direction of Sacred 3, and, surprise surprise, not much of is it positive. Behold, some of the more coherent concerns of the Sacred fanbase

THE AWESOMENESS OF THE GAME CAME FROM THE OPEN WORLD GAMEPLAY, WHERE YOU GOT TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND REALLY CONNECT WITH YOUR CHARACTER. WHY, GOD, WHY, WOULD YOU REMOVE THE FEATURE THAT MADE THE GAME WHAT IT WAS IN THE FIRST PLACE????

To the developers: WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO THE SACRED SERIES??
WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU NOT MAKE SACRED 3 OPEN WORLD AND REMOVE LOCAL CO-OP?!?!?!?!?!

Neither I nor my wife will be buying *Sacred 3* in its current state.

AS A FAN, I WAS PROMISED THAT THE THIRD ENTRY IN THE SERIES WOULD KEEP THE CHARM OF PREVIOUS TITLES.

Instead of making better games nowadays, they just want to make better graphics?! I mean, what else does the game has to offer?! No offline Co-op?! Are there Seraphs?

Now, I see *Sacred 3*, read the 'Features", and, wow... so... There is NO *Sacred* in *Sacred 3*? Why don't you call it something else? *Citadel* is different, it's a spin-off and looks cool, but *Sacred 3*, with NO OPEN WORLD? WHAT THE HELL!!!!

Good old internet forums. Of course, the angry rants of a few fans on forums are hardly representative of everyone, but it's clear that a common sentiment is there. Are they just resistant to change, or do they have a point?

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ A classic dungeon-crawling action-RPG on Vita!
- □ Constant co-op. Play in a team of four, either online or with the AI.
- × New classes that avoid falling into generic genre tropes.
- ○ New developer means new ideas – but is this a good thing?

△○×□ Quality quibbles aside, it's good to see another example of the ARPG genre on console. More, please!

exploring the dark, mysterious depths by yourself, a lone warrior surrounded by a hostile world. Sure, the option to have teammates is a welcome one, but the fact it is forced upon you is cause for concern for many. Additionally, despite being built around co-op play, this is only possible online, with no option for local co-op. Considering how easy it would be to implement (no need for split-screen, after all) this seems a huge omission.

Our five character classes this time are the angel-like Seraphim, the sun-warrior Safiri, spearwoman Ancarian, ranger Khukuri and new addition Malakhim, who dual-wields curved blades and is skilled in blood magic. The series has always been good at avoiding generic fantasy archetypes in its classes (warrior, mage, rogue, etc) and the approach continues here. That said, good luck figuring out what areas each of these characters excels in at a glance...

Probably the most exciting aspect of *Sacred 3* is that little note at the top of the page: "Also coming to Vita". More games on Vita is never a bad thing, and despite a wealth of great JRPGs, the console is yet to house a Western-style action-RPG. Breaking the open world into more discreet chunks could really pay off on Vita, transforming the game into more episodic, bite-sized parts better suited to playing on the bus or train.

Considering the change in developer, perhaps it isn't surprising that *Sacred 3* seems vastly different from its predecessor. Wanting to switch things up and keep the game feeling fresh is commendable, but Keen Games runs the risk of alienating an existing fanbase with such large changes. In a B-list franchise like *Sacred*, that current fanbase is extremely important, so it will be interesting to see how the enthusiasts take to this new vision.

Sam Smith

SACRED 3 is being developed over in Germany by Keen Games. Check the website for more details: **sacred3.deepsilver.com**

THE BAT IS BACK

Here it is: the third and final chapter in Rocksteady's *Arkham* trilogy. Ignore *Arkham Origins* – it was alright, but thoroughly unnecessary and simply more of the same, a spin-off made by a different studio to fill a gap in a schedule. This is the proper sequel to the wonderful *Arkham City*, set one year after the events of that game.

GO GO GOTHAM

The game will take place in an open-world Gotham, far larger than anything seen from the series so far. One of the main reasons for this is the addition of the Batmobile. You'll obviously need a sizable city to drive such a fast and powerful car around in, and from the sounds of things Gotham will be expansive and full of things to do.

Instant Expert

ETA 14 OCTOBER | **DEV** ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS | **PUB** WARNER BROS

Batman: Arkham Knight

PS4

EVERYONE'S INVITED

The Scarecrow has united all of Batman's enemies for a night in a last-ditch attempt to take down the Caped Crusader. We've seen The Penguin, Harley Quinn, Two-Face and The Riddler, and we know there will be several more, including fan favourite Hush. They'll stop at nothing until the Dark Knight finally draws his last breath...

A NEW CHALLENGER HAS APPEARED

It's not just old faces, though, as the game will feature an entirely new villain: the Arkham Knight. Created by Rocksteady with help from comic book writer Geoff Johns and artist Jim Lee, Arkham Knight resembles a more militarised, robotic take on the Batman suit with the Arkham Asylum logo on his chest. We've no idea who it is, but he looks like he could give the Caped Crusader a real tough time.

FUTURE-PROOF

One of the most interesting things about *Arkham Knight* is that it's next-gen (or current-gen now, we suppose) only. That means the game will only be coming to PS4, Xbox One and PC, with no version for PS3 or Xbox 360 owners. This might suck if you've yet to make the PS4 jump, but for those of us who have it's excellent news.

WHO IS THE ARKHAM KNIGHT?

The big mystery going into *Batman: Arkham Knight* is exactly that. Who exactly is the Arkham Knight, and what are his motivations? We know he isn't a fan of Batman, but that's about it. The obvious guess would be The Joker, supposedly dead at the end of *Arkham City*. Warner Bros apparently doesn't believe in a *Batman* game without The Joker (see *Arkham Origins*) so it's not unlikely he'll be shoehorned into this one too in a rubbish plot twist none of us want. But will he be the Arkham Knight? Joker is a badass, but he's never been that much of a physical specimen.

No, our money is on the second Robin: Jason Todd. Todd was supposedly killed by the Joker way back when, and although he eventually resurfaces, he's had a relatively antagonistic relationship with Batman ever since. The games seem to take place in a time period where Tim Drake, the third Robin, is filling the role, so the potential for Jason Todd to return is clearly there. The main question that throws up is whether your average gamer will know who Jason Todd is (probably not) but that's nothing that a bit of exposition can't solve.

Of course, the third possibility is that Arkham Knight is exactly what Rocksteady is claiming: an entirely new, original character. Given everyone's love for a big reveal, we just don't see it happening. Mark our words: there is someone under that mask that will be familiar to *Batman* fans. Who, exactly, is yet to be seen...

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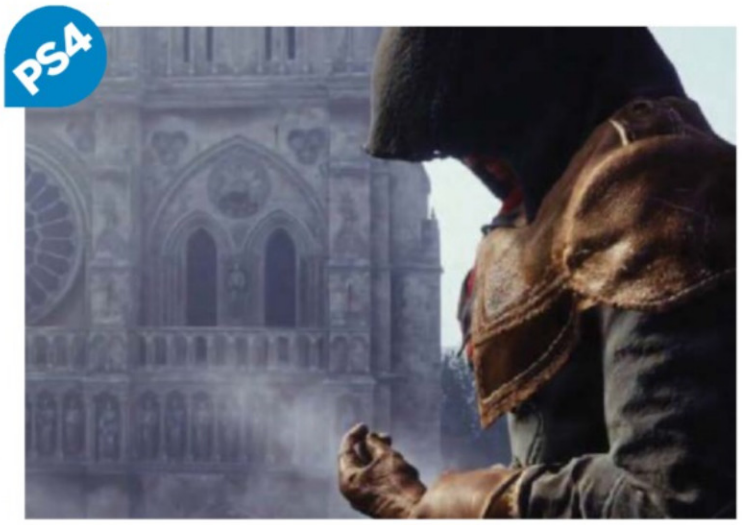
PREVIEW ROUND-UP

Some games came out ages ago, others are about to be released and some are miles off. Here, you'll find a selection of games from the latter two categories, but which will be next to join your collection?

HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER

THE SEQUEL TO one of our favourite indie games simply can't come soon enough. Offering more of the gory neon action of the first game, *Hotline Miami 2* will now cast you as several different characters as you make your way through various maps, never more than a split-second from death. It still looks beautiful (in a retro kind of way) and it still sounds fantastic, with wonderful, pulsating Eighties-style trance urging you along as you dash from kill to kill.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2014



ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY

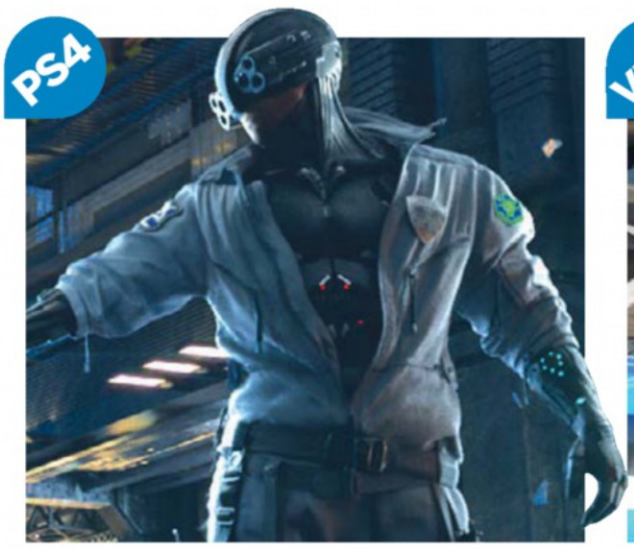
THERE STILL ISN'T much info floating around about the latest *Assassin's Creed* game, unsurprising considering its existence leaked earlier than it was supposed to. This time around we visit France during the French Revolution, a period of social upheaval rife with history to use and explore when creating a story. Interestingly, *Unity* is being developed only for the new consoles, with a different game coming to PS3 and 360 around the same time. The footage of *Unity* released so far shows the benefits to this approach as it looks beautiful, even more so than the stunning *Black Flag*.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

SOMA

WE NOW HAVE a bit more info on *SOMA*, the new first-person horror title from Frictional Games, the studio behind the terrifying *Amnesia*. The game is set on an underwater research facility, PATHOS-2, where a piece of machinery has begun to take on human characteristics. It's a fascinating premise, raising questions of what it truly means to be human. It's still a ways off, but considering how good *Amnesia* was, we don't mind waiting. If you thought *Outlast* was scary, you haven't seen anything yet.

RELEASE DATE: 2015



CYBERPUNK 2077

WE LOVE CD Projekt RED with a fierce, burning passion. The *Witcher* games are excellent, and we can't wait for the series to debut on a PlayStation platform with *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. Looking further ahead, though, we find the studio's other game: *Cyberpunk 2077*. A mature RPG set in the *Cyberpunk* tabletop RPG universe, this is one of our most anticipated games of all. It's still a long way off though, so holding our collective breath might not be the best idea we've ever had...

RELEASE DATE: 2016

TABLE TOP RACING

AN iOS AND Android racing game with some serious pedigree behind it, *Table Top Racing* is developed by Playrise, a team containing members who once worked on the *WipEout* series. Imagine a mixture of *Micro Machines* and *Mario Kart* and you aren't too far off – there's even the option of a traditional top-down view for fans of old-school toy racing. The Vita version has been completely rebuilt, with more than double the polygon count and running at a smooth 60 frames per second.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014

THE EVIL WITHIN

RETURNING TO SURVIVAL-horror, Shinji Mikami (the man who essentially created the genre) is back with *The Evil Within*. His first horror game since *Resident Evil 4*, Mikami is back to, in his words, "redefine survival-horror". From what we've seen so far, there doesn't appear to be much redefining going on, as gameplay looks very similar to *Resi 4*. That isn't a problem, though: another game with similar gameplay from the same creator sounds just fine to us. It may not be too scary, but who cares?

RELEASE DATE: 29 AUGUST

PERSONA 5

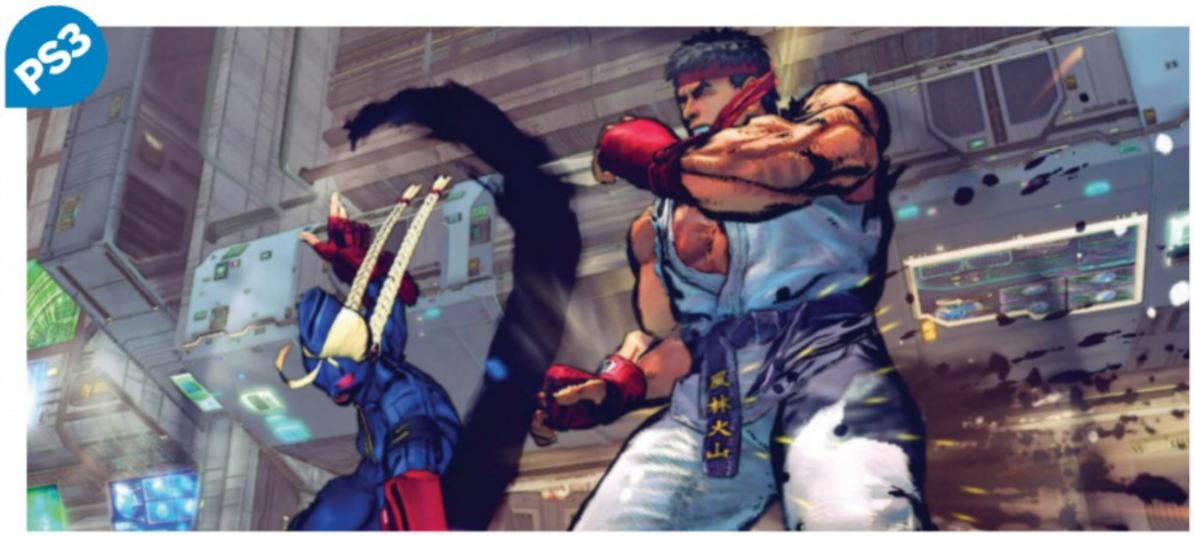
THERE MAY HAVE been little information released on *Persona 5* so far, but so what? *Persona 5* is a thing that will be coming out next year and it will be *awesome*. The team behind *Persona 3* and *4* is back again, so we expect another JRPG of the utmost quality. The theme of the game this time revolves around breaking free of society's restraints. It's a bit of a shame the game is only on PS3, but the series has always seemed to be a console behind, and it's never stopped the games from being amazing.

RELEASE DATE: 2015

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE II

A GAME THAT has been in development for approximately forever, starting out as an Atari 2600 game in the Seventies. We exaggerate, but the game has been in development for a long time, casting doubts as to whether it would ever actually see release. We hope it does, as *Kingdom Under Fire II* looks utterly awesome. Imagine a fantasy *Dynasty Warriors* on a huge scale and you won't be too far off. Combining an action-RPG with MMO elements and real-time strategy, the battles in *KUF II* look amazing.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2014



ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV

THE WAIT IS almost over for what appears to be the final version of *Street Fighter IV* – for real, this time. The game will first be available as a digital upgrade for owners of *Super Street Fighter IV*, before being released as a full physical version a few weeks later. The biggest addition is the quintet of new characters, although calling them 'new' is a bit of stretch. Four have simply been carried over from the less-than-stellar *Street Fighter X Tekken*, and the fifth, Decapre, is essentially a Cammy clone with charge moves instead of traditional motions. Cheeky, Capcom... real cheeky.

The game also rebalances the existing cast, as well as offering new stages and online modes. Regardless of your opinion of *Street Fighter IV*, the amount of content is impressive, especially when you consider this will sell for a reduced price. This is still gonna be the main fighting game for most of the community for years to come, so love it or hate it, you're going to have to play it.

RELEASE DATE: JUNE

DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION

BIOWARE HAS NEVER managed to replicate its success with *Mass Effect* when it comes to *Dragon Age*. The first game was good, but it still wasn't special in the same way that *Mass Effect* was. The less said about *Dragon Age II* the better, a huge disappointment that managed to be worse than its predecessor. There's a lot of pressure on the team with its first PS4 showing, and we hope it can pull it off and create the first must-have *Dragon Age*.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

In the space of a single generation, the FPS grew to be a gaming superpower. What can we expect to see from the genre on PS4 as developers look to retain the shooter's stranglehold on the industry?

Gaming's biggest genre is under threat. After years tearing through the sales charts and dominating the console world, first-person shooters aren't quite the terrifying force they once were. To the layman, *Call Of Duty* might still seem like the biggest game on the planet, but that's a Western interpretation of the industry.

Outside of typical US and European mainstream gaming, the MOBA scene has comfortably become the strongest genre out there, with *League Of Legends* boasting more concurrent players and a bigger install base than anything else on the globe. It's a phenomenon and it came out of nowhere.

In order to see where the FPS genre is going and how it is trying to reestablish its dominance, we need to see where it came from and how studios have taken lessons from the past in order to innovate. *Wolfenstein 3D* might not technically be the first FPS, but it's probably the best place to start. id's classic World War II blast had such an effect on the industry that it's still a viable name today.

The setup was simple – a series of rooms in a 3D maze, which the player moved through from behind the eyes of and gun-filled hand of BJ Blazkowicz, and Nazi enemies to shoot at. Today it seems primitive, but it's amazing how much of this formula has endured – how much we still see today in *Call Of Duty*, *Killzone* and *Borderlands*.

id improved on its own formula with the seminal *Doom* and then brought the genre fully 3D with *Quake*, and since then, every studio with its eyes on greatness has wanted a killer FPS game in its portfolio. The hook is simple – immersive action, the thrill of shooting enemies (rightly or wrongly, it's a real and tangible thing) and constant feedback – every action in an FPS has a direct

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5 THINGS EVERY FPS GAME NEEDS

MOVEMENT

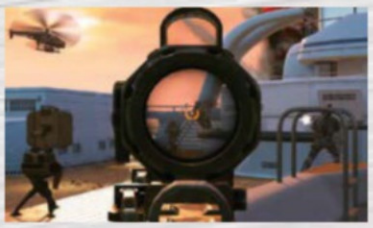
Whether free-running in *Mirror's Edge* or just sprinting in *COD*, the feeling of movement in an first-person game is vital. A game can't feel like what it actually is – a camera flying about an environment.

GUNFEEL

A word invented by indie developer Vlambeer, but one that's been more important to this genre than anything else. There's no point firing a peashooter. Your guns need to feel powerful.

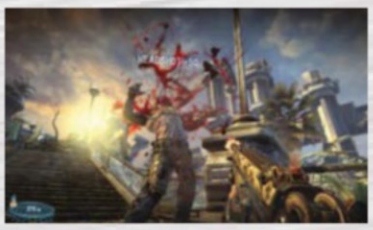
IMMERSIVENESS

A tricky one to nail down, and something that's case-by-case. This is a combination of lighting, movement, narrative, detail and audio. Each game needs different amounts of these crucial flavours.



ACCURACY

An easy one, or so you'd think. Most games get the fact your bullets need to hit where your reticule is, but in order to maintain that sense of power and fun, the enemies need to react as you'd expect.



INNOVATION

Many would argue this genre is stagnating, but they'd be insane. Okay, *COD* changes little, but so much has been achieved with this viewpoint in the last decade and it's not going to stop.

"IT WASN'T UNTIL COD 4 THAT THIS SERIES BEGAN TO CRUSH THE COMPETITION"

consequence in the game world – you quite literally interact with the game as a weapon.

As connectivity speeds improved and internet cafés sprung up around the globe, the world of the competitive shooter sprang to life and changed the way the world perceived not only the genre, but gaming altogether. Before *Quake*, multiplayer was typically found in split-screen console games or complicated LAN setups. But now, players could challenge each other from their own homes with relative ease, and the FPS genre exploded.

Even at this point, though, in the late Nineties, first-person shooters were considered a PC property, thanks to the superior power of those machines and the mouse and keyboard control system. Its migration to consoles didn't happen at once, it was a gradual process that involved a few key games. Without *GoldenEye 007*, without *Halo*, without *Medal Of Honor*, the console FPS would not be where it is today.

The reason it took so long for consoles and the FPS to get together was simple – control. Fundamentally, designers needed to work out how to allow players to move and look around at the same time. When controllers offered only D-pads and buttons, there was no solution. Thankfully, the great minds at Sony created the DualShock – a controller with two analogue sticks. Considering no one truly understood what the second stick was for, it could be argued that Sony even stumbled upon this most essential innovation. But soon, FPS developers worked out that one stick could be used to move, the second to look... and the rest, as they say, is history.

HEEDING THE CALL

In the PS2 era, Sony searched high and low for an FPS that could compete with *Halo* on the Xbox. *TimeSplitters* tried. *Killzone* tried. The PS3 had similar issues. *Haze*? No thanks. *Resistance*? Good try, but it's not Master Chief. *Killzone* again? Better, but still not the all-conquering beast Sony needed. Step forward, then, a multiplatform game that became so big, so ubiquitous and so utterly dominant, that it elevated both the PS3 and Xbox 360 to new levels of success. Enter *Call Of Duty*.

Yes, of course *COD* originally arrived on PC and yes it technically predates the 360 and PS3 console generation, but it wasn't until Infinity Ward's marvellous *Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* arrived that this series really began to crush the competition. Its searing production values, revolutionary multiplayer and – yes – inch-perfect controls combined to create a monster, and it hasn't looked back since, smashing records, topping charts and entering the hearts and minds of millions of gamers worldwide.

Call Of Duty's success elevated the FPS to the top of the tree, but its triumph has also led to its downfall. When you have a product as dominant as *Call Of Duty*, it's almost impossible to justify the

△○×□ Not all soldiers are born equal. Customisation options let you express yourself ready for war.

△○×□ Sadly, it's unlikely that we'll see another *Resistance* game. The third one was absolutely brilliant.

"ESPORTS IS CATCHING UP WITH THE POPULARITY OF ONLINE BLASTING"

GAME CHANGER: BATTLEFIELD 4

Apart from the fact that DICE's big-money blast basically doesn't work, what differences have we seen between PS3 and PS4? Well, the first and most obvious change is the way the thing looks. The PS4 version is gorgeous – running at 1080p and a solid 60fps, making its Xbox One equivalent seem rather feeble. On top of that, it has the option to play with a colossal 64 players on the largest Conquest maps, a number that fundamentally changes the way *Battlefield* plays.

Most importantly of all, though, it feels like the PS4 version of *Battlefield 4* actually lives up to DICE's vision. On PS3 it is so pared back that it doesn't really resemble the game at its finest. When the PS4 version works, it brings the chaos and drama of digital war to your screen like nothing else, and is a true indication that next-gen means more than just shiny graphics.

risk needed to change it. Too much money is on the line. And as other games have followed in Infinity Ward and Treyarch's footsteps, trying to secure that FPS goldmine, the genre has begun to stagnate, at least at the highest levels.

The perceived lack of innovation has led to a downturn in sales and the discussion that *Call Of Duty* is no longer the most exciting name in videogames. *COD* might not be able to change, but that doesn't mean other games can't – and we're just on the cusp of the next FPS revolution. This time, though, it's not going to come from a single source. This revolution is a three-pronged attack.

First of all, we have the new breed of 'big' shooters. These are the games that are looking to take over at the top of the pile, to knock *COD* off its perch and show that there is room for something new. This pack is unquestionably led by Bungie's *Destiny*, with its faultless pedigree and thirst for innovation. This is both a cooperative and competitive shooter, set in a vast universe and layered with RPG and MMO trappings. From any other studio, all of that noise would be cast aside as meaningless hype. This isn't any other studio, though – this is Bungie, with all of Activision's cash behind it. *Destiny* is going to make noise come September this year.

Also, the eSports world is finally catching up with the popularity of online blasting. It's true that the camera restricts a spectactor's enjoyment of an FPS in comparison to the top-down view of a MOBA, but the recent *Call Of Duty* Championships in LA has shown that there is money to be made in turning gamers into professionals. With the abundance of Twitch streams on PS4 and a new generation of players growing up with twin-sticks under their thumbs, expect to see the big games' multiplayers gearing themselves further towards competitive play.

PS3 INSPIRATION

POST-COD

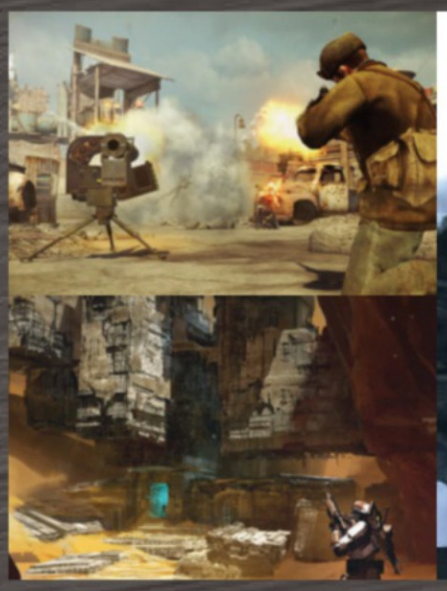
If the last generation was all about *Call Of Duty*, it was also about everything but *Call Of Duty*. This series changed the way we play in both single and multiplayer, but its success has encouraged smaller developers to create experiences that offer something different.

BROADCAST

PC users have been streaming their FPS exploits for some time, and it's already become huge on PS4. FPS games are tactical, they require both twitch skill and map knowledge, and watching high-level players stream their games is entertaining and important.

NO MULTIPLAYER

The last generation proved that it takes a lot of money to create a multiplayer mode to compete with *COD*. *Battlefield* is there, *Titanfall* on Xbox is a competitor and PS4's *Killzone Shadow Fall* has an audience, but most sensible studios have given up that dream.



△○×□ It's not all about lobbing bullets around the place. Often, tactical equipment usage is crucial.

As ripe with potential as the likes of *Destiny* are, though, and the potential money-spinning power of eSports, it's the smaller, more thought-provoking games that are really leading the way in FPS innovation. Now that Unity 3D is both an affordable and high-quality engine solution for smaller development teams, lower-budget first-person and FPS games are coming thick and fast, trading on the immersiveness that the perspective naturally brings but not concerning themselves with trying to ape the vast-budget spectacle of *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield*.

We've already had a cracking example on PlayStation 4 – the terrifying *Outlast*. This is a game that feels rich and luxurious, but is made on just a fraction of the budget of one of the giant FPS games. Technically, it's not a shooter of course, but it still stands on the shoulders of giants; it uses a language, a skillset and an appreciation that gamers have developed over two decades of running around through corridors blasting fools.

Other games are experimenting with the first-person perspective. *Everybody's Gone To The Rapture*, *Daylight*, even Jonathan Blow's *The Witness*. Not shooters, but interesting and important. The work these games do will go on to inform bigger, broader and more expansive shooters – just as indie cinema eventually contributes to the look and feel of blockbusters (*The Dark Knight* being a prime example).

VIRTUAL INSANITY

So we have the forward-thinking blockbusters and the thought-provoking indie... what's the third part of our FPS revolution? Well, it's one from the future, but what a future it could be. At GDC, Sony officially announced its VR headset, codenamed Morpheus, and has already shown off underwater tech demo *The Deep* from London Studio, and announced *Cult County* as the first official game for the device. And what's *Cult County*? A first-person survival-horror.

With its 3D image, headtracking and Move compatibility, Morpheus has the potential to change the way we think about and perceive this medium. The FPS has always craved immersiveness, and now it has the potential to achieve that, to truly put you inside a game world and let you see it not through your own eyes.

Let's be clear – Morpheus won't be the right fit for every shooter and games that require the precision and speed of a *Call Of Duty* will still be better served by a controller. What an exciting time, though. The FPS monarchy is being attacked from all angles by games in its own genre.

It may never knock the MOBA off its perch – there are too many millions playing in Asia to overcome – but anyone who thinks the FPS is dying is about to get a serious shock. The proudest genre of all is about to change gaming once again, and we'll be there on the frontlines with you.

FIVE GAMES WE CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY ON THE MORPHEUS

AND FIVE THAT DON'T NEED IT

DARK SOULS

YEAH, WE LOVE *Dark Souls*. Surprise. One of the best things about the *Souls* series is the harsh, unrelenting world, a sense of loneliness and despair unlike that of any other game. Sure, it sounds horrible, but that's what makes it so great. Imagine how much worse/better it would be with a VR headset on, exploring a desolate, violent world that wants you dead, feeling like you are truly there. What can we say, we are masochists. The potential for excellent world design to be heightened even further by virtual reality, truly inhabiting this place, is the most exciting aspect of the technology.

NO MAN'S SKY

THE UPCOMING SPACE exploration game from Hello Games has captured the attention of gamers worldwide, with the promises of a procedurally generated universe full of planets, galaxies and space stations to explore. It's a life we'd love to live, and VR is the closest we're likely to come in our lifetimes. First-person games will benefit the most from VR, as the challenges of putting the player into the world are reduced – the character's viewpoint is the player's viewpoint, after all. From the signs of it, *No Man's Sky* is being developed with VR mind, so signs are positive.

VIRTUA FIGHTER

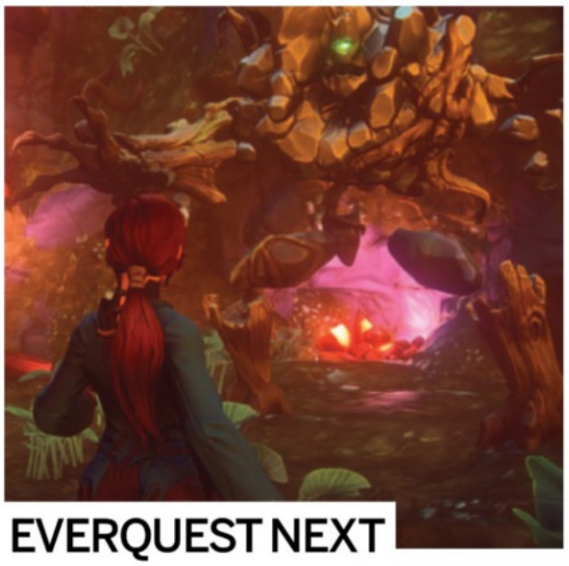
DESPITE THE NAME, fighting games like *Virtua Fighter* just don't work when it comes to VR. The recent disgrace that is *Fighter Within* on Xbox One should be all the proof you need, an attempt to use Kinect and have the player control the fighter with their movements and body. Long story short, it didn't work (at all) and attempts to make fighting games work with VR wouldn't either. The genre has evolved to absolutely need all the elements it possesses, from the side-on view to the button-based controls. VR wouldn't really add anything, but it could take something away.

ALIEN: ISOLATION

COMING BACK TO the whole masochist thing, we love a good scare. *Alien: Isolation* is shaping up to be the *Alien* game we've always wanted, a survival-horror where your only option is to hide rather than take the Alien on face-to-face. Experiencing such a scenario with a VR headset on will probably be too much for a lot of people, but we welcome it. We want horror games to truly terrify us, make us weep with terror and prevent us from getting a good night's sleep. What better way than to go toe-to-toe with a xenomorph? BRING IT ON.

BAYONETTA

WHILE THE CONCEPT of playing a game like *Bayonetta* in VR might sound awesome, think about it more analytically and you might see why that isn't necessarily the case. Games like *Bayonetta* and *Devil May Cry* require perfect timing and a constant awareness of what is happening around you. While seeing it all on VR *would* be cool, it could make things difficult in such a fast-paced environment. VR exists mainly to emphasise immersion, and in a game that is so clearly that – a game – it's less necessary and ultimately less important.



EVERQUEST NEXT

MMOS ARE ADDICTIVE and immersive enough as it is. Using a VR headset might be a step too far, and there's a very real danger of us never leaving the house again. Remember the *World Of Warcraft* episode of *South Park*? Yeah, that could be us if VR MMOs become a thing. Considering *EverQuest* is being developed by Sony, we anticipate extensive support for the Morpheus. Developed with PS4 and VR in mind, *EverQuest Next* has the potential to be the most atmospheric MMO ever made. We know what it would do to our lives... but we want it nonetheless...

MERCENARY KINGS

MERCENARY KINGS IS essentially an example here – any other 2D game will do. Virtual reality, if used correctly, can enhance and improve an experience, making a player feel like they inhabit a game world in a way impossible with current gaming technology. Using a VR headset to add a few 3D effects and surround sound to a 2D game seems both unnecessary and, again, a gimmick. Much like adding 3D to every film just because everyone else is doing it, using VR on every game will not be the way to get the average gamer interested in the technology.

METAL GEAR SOLID

BEAR WITH US on this one. You might think playing *Metal Gear Solid* with the Morpheus would be awesome, but thinking about it, we disagree. VR works best when the player is the character, letting them inhabit the game world with a greater sense of presence than ever before. In a game like *Metal Gear*, with a main character so incredibly defined, the player does not inhabit them in the same way. The player does not become Snake so much as they come along with him for the ride, and as such, VR, the aspect of being in the game, seems less necessary.

XCOM

STRATEGY GAMES ARE arguably the least immersive of all – directing tiny troops from above might make you feel like some omnipotent overlord, but it also serves as a direct, constant reminder that you are playing a game. As such, we don't really see what the Morpheus or other virtual reality headsets could do for strategy games like *XCOM* that would really benefit the overall experience. It would feel more like a gimmick than a useful improvement, and the biggest way to kill an exciting new technology is to turn it into a gimmick.

FAR CRY

FOR OUR MONEY, *Far Cry 3* is one of the best open-world FPS games in recent memory. A beautiful world combined with wonderful gunplay and a ton of fun things to do led to it being one of our favourites of the last few years. With rumours that *Far Cry 4* will be set in the Himalayas (which would be awesome, but even if it isn't true, *Far Cry 4* is definitely coming), we'd love to see the game support Morpheus. Imagine the thrill of climbing a mountain, scoping out an enemy camp, hang-gliding down and taking down the enemy guards one by one... in virtual reality. Amazing.

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THE EVOLUTION OF UNCHARTED

NAUGHTY DOG ON THE FRANCHISE'S PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

With over 17 million copies sold across the three releases that graced the console, it's difficult to argue against the notion that Uncharted is/was the flagship series for the PlayStation 3. As a result of that success its charismatic hero, Nathan Drake, is the closest the system has to a definitive mascot – despite those trying, and in vain, to promote the likes of Ratchet and Clank and Sackboy up to such lofty status.

Drake's popularity, combined with such successful commercial numbers, makes for pleasant reading for developer Naughty Dog, a studio whose pre-*Uncharted* offerings were of the altogether more colourful, whimsical nature. The Santa Monica, California-based studio spent the entire lifecycle of the original PlayStation defining and building the *Crash Bandicoot* series. During the PlayStation 2's life its attentions switched to *Jak & Daxter*.

While *Uncharted* retains some of that core platforming element inherent to both Crash and Jak, the Drake experience is very different to what Naughty Dog had given us before. Without seeming pretentious, overly explicit or gratuitous, *Uncharted* is an altogether more mature proposition from the studio.

"As technology has advanced throughout the years, it has allowed us to expand the kinds of stories we can tell – primarily by letting us make games with realistic characters in them," Evan Wells, co-president of Naughty Dog tells us. "At that point it was a natural progression for our stories to delve into more complex, more *human* topics, and I believe those topics lend themselves to having a mature or adult feel to them. That doesn't mean the games have to be strictly serious, as evidenced by Drake's sense of humour. Maybe we're also maturing ourselves... just a little."

That's not to say that the first *Uncharted* wasn't influenced by the *Jak* series. After all, *Jax X: Combat Racing* launched a mere two years prior to Drake's inaugural adventure, but we'd rather forget the awful combat racer. Ex-Naughty Dog environment modeller Don Poole describes how some of the initial ideas for *Uncharted* were more fantastical than the finished game tends to indicate.

"Originally I think that the team was still very much under the influence of the *Jak* series," says Poole. "That world was a crossover between pure platformer and an action-adventure world. This influenced our thinking. We were talking about a more 'realistic' game in terms of how it's modelled and rendered but the concepts were much more far out. One was a forest world where the antagonists lived underground. It had elements of Tolkien in it, for sure!"

Whether or not Nathan Drake plus "elements of Tolkien" would have achieved the same levels of popularity as the series has since experienced is up for debate. The fact at the time of development, however, was that the age of the average gamer had increased, and appetites had changed to match their advanced years. Poole explains. "The market had changed a lot by [the start of the PS3 era]. The demographic was older and gritty shooters were really dominating. Sony wanted very much to get into that market share, it pushed all of its developers in this direction. What made *Uncharted* start to evolve and stand out was that [former *Uncharted* creative director] Amy Hennig and the folks developing the theme and story were really wanting to ensure we had a strong Saturday matinee, old-school movie vibe. I don't think we realised *Uncharted* was going to be a success until after

we finished it. I'm not kidding. Every new game is a risk. We were venturing off into new territory for us as a team and for the game genre as a whole."

It's *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*'s cinematic vibe, combined with the interactive platforming and shooting sequences, that provides the template subsequent games in the series have followed and improved upon. It's also a template that imitators have tried, and largely failed, to take advantage of. Defining that winning formula with the first game in the franchise has reaped enormous rewards for Naughty Dog, allowing the design team to concentrate on iteration rather than complete makeovers.

"There are two aspects that, at first glance, appear attractive when considering a sequel," continues Wells. "The first revolves around characters. After taking a lot of time and care to develop and flesh out these characters, it's only natural to want to delve further into their stories and personalities. The other aspect has to do with iterating on design and technology – once you've laid out the ground rules for a game universe, you can really start pushing the envelope by building upon and refining the gameplay and technical achievements of prior games."

As far as gameplay and technical refinements or improvements between *Uncharted 1* and *2* are concerned, you needn't look past the opening scene of the latter. One of the most impactful and memorable introductions ever put to disc, *Uncharted 2* kicks off with Drake regaining consciousness inside a crashed train that's balanced precariously over the deathly edge of a snow-capped mountain. Dazed and confused, Drake must scramble for his life, climbing up the wreckage and onto the relative safety of the icy rock above.

This sequence, told out of chronological order with the rest of the story, sets the bar for the kind of interactive storytelling that has become a hallmark of Naughty Dog design. Expertly timed use of drama-exaggerating cutscenes, integrated into

UNCHARTING THE NUMBERS

With near-universal praise and budgets most developers could only dream of, the Uncharted series is not one to struggle when it comes to putting up impressive numbers...

GLOBAL SALES

- UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE • **4.72 MILLION**
- UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES • **6.37 MILLION**
- UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION • **6.32 MILLION**

55
PERFECT REVIEW SCORES THROUGHOUT THE SERIES

ESTIMATED BUDGET

$25 MILLION
UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION

BOTH DRAKE'S FORTUNE AND AMONG THIEVES HAD AN ESTIMATED BUDGET OF £20MILLION

30,000
CANS OF SODA DRUNK DURING UNCHARTED 2 DEVELOPMENT

FILM ADAPTATION

5
THE UNCHARTED MOVIE SCRIPT HAS BEEN RESTARTED AN AMAZING FIVE TIMES SINCE 2008

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△○×□ Environmental design has become more varied and detailed as the technology driving the series has improved, with Drake having already visited much of the world over the course his three PS3 adventures.

△○×□ Stealth has come to be a cornerstone of the franchise and generally speaking, it works well.

"WE WERE ALREADY LEADING THE INDUSTRY IN OUR PERFORMANCE CAPTURE PRACTICES"

Drake's climb and no more than a few seconds in length, work to create a degree of cinematic polish not seen in the original and rarely seen in any game since.

Wells, when asked about his studio's approach to the motion capture techniques that facilitate this kind of presentation, describes the changes between the original and the sequel: "The biggest, most impactful [motion capture] change occurred between *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* and *Uncharted 2* as we made improvements in our performance capture pipeline. For *Uncharted 2*, we moved to a soundproof motion capture stage which enabled us to capture every aspect of the performances – motion and voice – at the same time.

"We were already leading the industry in our performance capture practices by using our voice actors to do the motion capture during production on *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, but not all of the audio was always usable. Being able to record voice was the next logical step, one that made the whole concept of performance capture take a huge leap forward."

The newly improved performance capture in *Uncharted 2* is perhaps demonstrated most consistently during moments when Drake is on-screen with another character. Much of the game sees you playing alongside another, non-playable character – whether its Harry Flynn in the Turkish museum early in the game, Chloe Frazer in the Nepalese village or Sherpa Tenzin up in the mountains.

While Nathan Drake, alongside his mentor Victor 'Sully' Sullivan and eventual wife Elena Fisher, are undoubtedly the series' leading cast members, the quality of the performance capture and writing means these support characters never feel anything less than well-rounded and worthwhile. Tenzin, with no grasp whatsoever of the English language, is particularly impressive for the impact he makes without us being able to understand a word he says.

"We give the same amount of love and care to developing all the new and secondary characters that we take with the main cast," explains Wells when asked about these characters. "We've long held that the best way to really get to know someone and see their personality is through their interactions with others. That makes it crucial that all the secondary characters have the same depth and complexity to their personalities and back-story as the main cast.

"It became a no-brainer to start making sure that at least one other character was around Drake as much as possible so the personalities could play off of each other and provide additional insight into who they really are. It also became a great technical challenge for us – to develop great buddy AI that would feel helpful and never really feel like a hindrance."

In large part, the focus on buddy AI and the way that influences and betters the experience offered by the original game is the reason *Uncharted 2* remains the most positively reviewed PS3 exclusive of all time. With the onset of the PS4 and the new generation of console hardware, that's a record that's unlikely to ever be broken.

FACES OF THE FRANCHISE

Thanks to a cinematic approach, Uncharted is blessed with a large and varied pool of memorable characters. Here are some of the best examples

NATHAN DRAKE

APPEARED: UNCHARTED 1, 2 AND 3 **PLAYED BY:** NOLAN NORTH

Treasure hunter, action hero, lover and namesake of Sir Francis Drake, Nathan is arguably the most magnetic protagonist to have been introduced in the PS3 era. His dedication to adventure is both his greatest strength and his most humanising weakness, leading him to incredible success while doing much to alienate him from those around him. Without doubt, the appeal of Drake himself has played a huge part in the success of his franchise.

VICTOR SULLIVAN

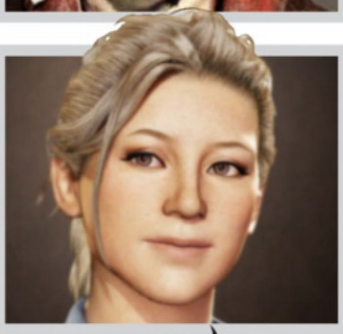
APPEARED: UNCHARTED 1, 2 AND 3 **PLAYED BY:** RICHARD MCGONAGLE

Nathan Drake's partner and mentor, Victor 'Sully' Sullivan is the closest the series has to some sort of father figure. His role is largely centred around providing the hero with advice and context for his actions, his words often reflecting concerns that us, the audience, also harbour while playing. Despite his mature years, Sully consistently proves his value as a key aide in Drake's quest for treasure.

TENZIN

APPEARED: UNCHARTED 2 **PLAYED BY:** PEMA DHONDUP

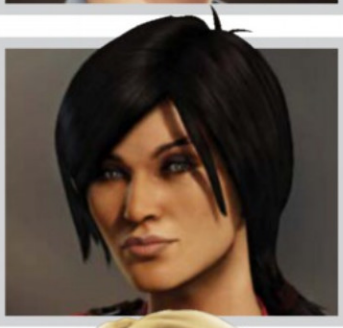
The fact that Tenzin is unable to speak English and yet makes such a powerful impression during his relatively limited screen time highlights succinctly Naughty Dog's talent for visual storytelling. As the leader of the vibrant Tibetan village Drake visits in *Uncharted 2*, it's Tenzin's job to act as a guide through the mountains – the two having to work together to solve a variety of simple puzzles.



ELENA FISHER

APPEARED: UNCHARTED 1, 2 AND 3 **PLAYED BY:** EMILY ROSE

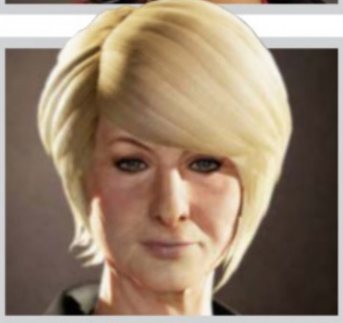
The primary female character of the series, Elena is every bit Drake's equal when it comes to courage, intelligence and sheer brazenness of action. Drake is generally at his most interesting when in Elena's company, the connection between the two elevating their respective personalities and adding weight to emotional moments. Elena and Sully are far and away the two most important figures in Drake's life.



CHLOE FRAZER

APPEARED: UNCHARTED 2 AND 3 **PLAYED BY:** CLAUDIA BLACK

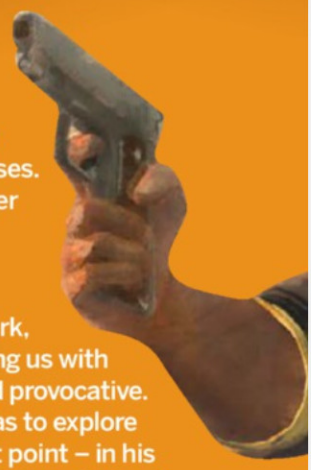
Difficult to read and with a history shrouded in mystery, Chloe is as enigmatic as she is alluring. She thrives on misdirection and even goes so far as make herself out to be the bad guy in order to most effectively execute on her plans. The love triangle between herself, Drake and Elena makes for arguably the series' most interesting sub-plot, adding an extra dimension above and beyond the action scenes.



KATHERINE MARLOWE

APPEARED: UNCHARTED 3 **PLAYED BY:** ROSALIND AYRES

As with so many greatest antagonists, Marlowe is British through and through – her dry wit and aristocratic accent the perfect juxtaposition for Drake's punchier, more charismatic tones. Marlowe is interesting among *Uncharted* antagonists predominantly because of her intelligence, relying on brain over brawn to obtain the ring of Sir Francis Drake that both herself and Nathan are so desperate to obtain.



"The pressure from the public and the publishers is for [sequels to be] 'Bigger! Better! Different but the same!' and it can really make or break a product," Poole muses. "I look at *Uncharted 2* and it's clearly better [than *Drake's Fortune*] in all respects."

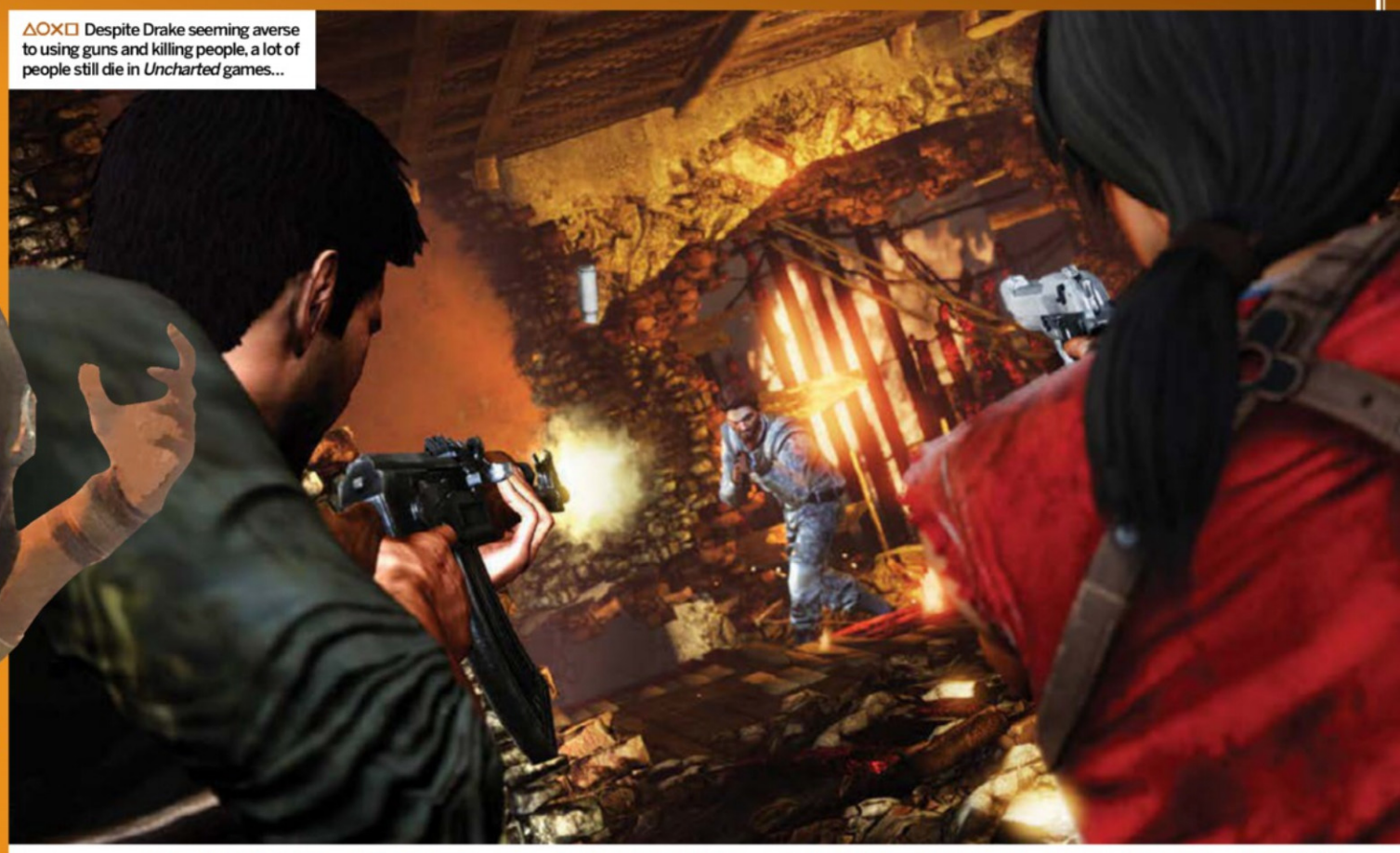
Things took a distinctly darker, more punishing tone with *Uncharted 3*, a game that begins with Drake touting his trademark, rascal-like sense of humour, before providing us with something altogether more foreboding and provocative. "One of our core goals with *Uncharted 3* was to explore what Drake was like when he's at his lowest point – in his 'career' and his personal life," Wells reveals. "To really beat him up physically and emotionally, as a vehicle to further explore his character."

There is no more explicit example of this approach than *Uncharted 3*'s desert scene, a sequence that stands out as (arguably) the most thought-provoking and well-crafted the series has yet to provide. "From the start we knew that sequence was going to be a big deal," Justin Richmond, ex-Naughty Dog game director, explained following the launch of *Uncharted 3*. "We wanted to do a 'lost in the desert' sequence and to make you feel as though you're in that moment with Drake as he's slowly losing it after days and days alone and without water," Richmond continues. "So, we figured out the tech we would need – like him getting dusty and the footprints – and then we sat down and designed each day [that Drake's lost] individually. "It was a difficult play-test because players would fall off the dune, so we had to build a system to allow players to walk along the edge of the dune without falling off. We had to subtly take away control like that, but it feels better for the player."

△○×□ It's not strictly a shooter, but gunplay is st

www.imagineshop.co.uk

△○×□ Despite Drake seeming averse to using guns and killing people, a lot of people still die in *Uncharted* games...



"THE SUCCESS OF OUR GAMES IS VALIDATION THAT WE'RE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT"

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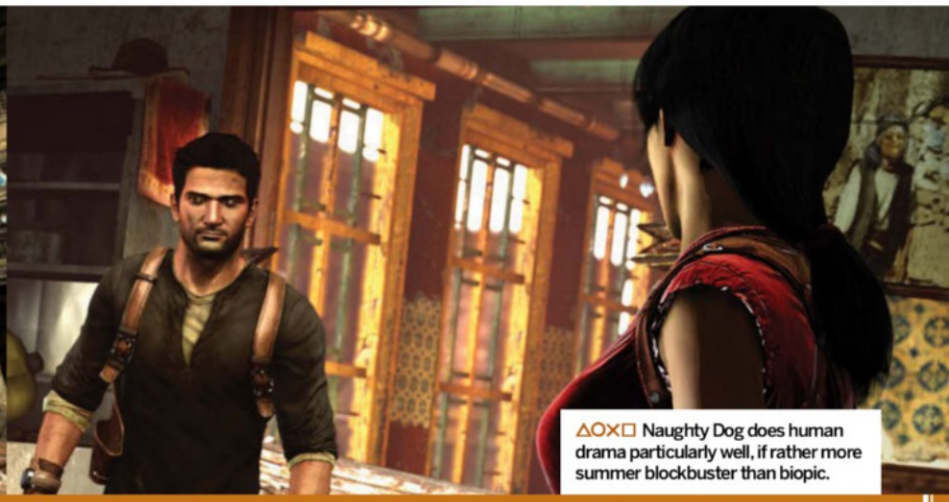

△○×□ Naughty Dog does human drama particularly well, if rather more summer blockbuster than biopic.

△○×□ By having its lead character play the role of treasure hunter, Naughty Dog has allowed its writing team near limitless narrative options.

While the technology improved enormously between the first and third *Uncharted* games, and the tone moved from pulp movie to something more serious, the approach to storytelling retained some key aspects. *Uncharted*'s truck chase, *Uncharted 2*'s train-climb opening and *Uncharted 3*'s desert wandering all relying on that design choice to give the player just enough 'agency' to feel in charge of what is, at its core, a guided experience.

"Integrating story with player agency is a challenge unique to our industry that every game with a narrative faces, but also what makes our industry so exciting," Wells says when probed about story and gameplay integration. "Our setup makes it very easy for the writers and cinematic team to work collaboratively with game designers – and anyone else needed – over the course of the game to make sure narrative and gameplay are integrated as organically as possible. Overall, our goal is to provide as much player agency as possible in every aspect of the game, while using cinematics when we need to really focus on evoking a specific tone or emotion in the player. We see the success of our games as validation that we're doing something right with our studio and development philosophy."

It's that organisational structure and desire to craft a specific tone that has set *Uncharted* apart from its genre peers and it's what makes every Naughty Dog release so highly anticipated – from sequels, to completely new endeavours like *The Last Of Us*.

While the technology has continued to improved with each *Uncharted* release, and will do so again with *Uncharted 4*, Naughty Dog's first PS4 offering, the fact that the underlying principles governing the franchise's design have remained largely the same indicates how expertly conceived that original approach was.

From such a strong foundation we can't help but feel excited about what Naughty Dog and *Uncharted* might potentially achieve with the expanded horizons offered by the PS4. Whatever the case, given past history and the future *Uncharted 4*, it's difficult to look beyond Nathan Drake as the continued face of the PlayStation brand for many years to come.

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2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil

Here we go again. Get the trumpet out

△○×□ There's very little different on the pitch. It all feels a bit old.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA

DEVELOPER EA Canada

PSN PRICE £39.99

PLAYERS 1-8

AGE RATING 3+

Trophies 49

1 4 1 43

PS3

JUST AS THE football machine rolls on and another season blends into another international tournament, so too EA's *FIFA* continues to replicate itself, an endless cycle of high production values, confusing menus and Clive Tyldesley. Unlike the last tournament tie-in, *Euro 2012*, though, *2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil* is back in a box ready to sit on store shelves, and costs just as much as *FIFA 14*, just a few months later.

That shouldn't come as a huge surprise, but somewhat more unusually we won't see a PS4 version this year. EA is focusing all its summer tournament lustre on the old generation of hardware, meaning this version of its biggest cash cow is almost indistinguishable from the last. Simply put, there is no more power to pull out of the PS3.

It's an odd choice that must make sense fiscally, but it's hard to feel justified in shelling out full price for a *FIFA* game that plays an inferior football match than its next-gen predecessor (a weird phrase if ever there was one). *2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil* still plays a decent kickabout of course, but it feels old and stymied by the relative lack of power. Old *FIFA* niggles like players facing the wrong way or wrapping their legs around each other have reappeared, and the game can't help but feel a little decrepit.

What these games do better than anything, though, is capturing the spirit, drama and mania of a tournament, and in that regard this is perhaps EA's finest effort yet. From the music to the nation-specific crowd chants, the rousing national anthems and the surprisingly excellent Talk Radio tracks, it really does a fine job in whipping you into that World Cup frenzy.

As for the tournament itself, EA again does a cracking job. The stadium flyovers lack the detail of their PS4 *FIFA 14* counterparts, but you still get the sense that you're learning more about the vast host nation and what conditions could affect the players in the different stadiums.

If you choose to play through a World Cup, then you're chucked straight into the tournament itself (after selecting your 23-man squad) and into the first match. Weirdly, though, between tournament matches, you have to train certain

"IT REALLY DOES A FINE JOB IN WHIPPING YOU INTO THAT WORLD CUP FRENZY"

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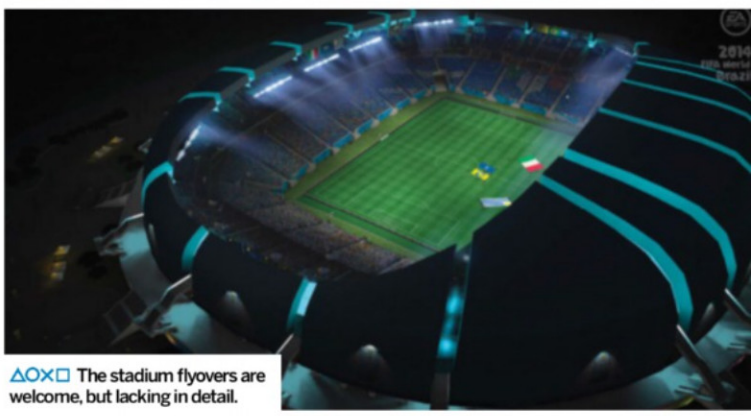
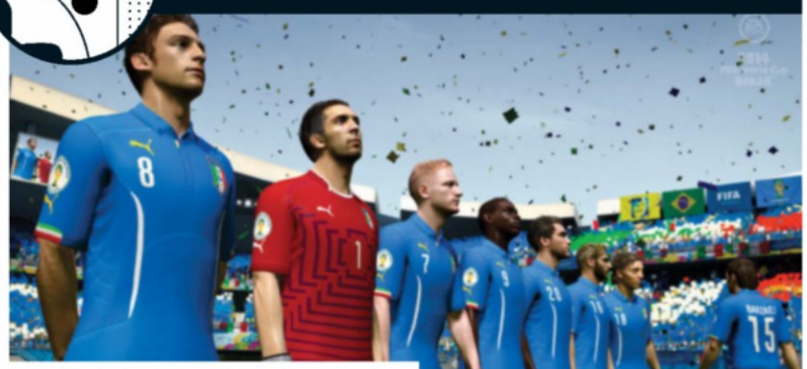
△○×□ Training games break up the World Cup matches. They're boring.



△○×□ The stadium flyovers are welcome, but lacking in detail.

PLAY CHALLENGE



△○×□ There are over 200 national teams in the game. Try and win the World Cup with the worst.

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...

NO CHANCE

△ WIN THE WORLD Cup with Vanuatu, the lowest ranked team on the planet.

IT IS NOW

□ BEAT GERMANY 4-2 with England after extra time, much like the boys from Blighty did back in 1966.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

members of your squad by completing mini-games (the same ones you've already played in *FIFA 14*). It's tedious padding; busywork when you just want to get back into the action.

Beyond the tournament, you can play an online World Cup, try your hand at some classic World Cup scenarios, or once again plod through 'Captain Your Country', the Be A Pro mode that has been a stalwart in these games since *Euro 2008*. Here you and three other players compete to be the best player in your team and eventually lead them to World Cup glory. It's largely unchanged.

Probably the most disappointing element of *2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil*, though, is the lack of innovation present on the pitch. Historically, these games let a second team of *FIFA* developers try out some new ideas and fix some of the issues plaguing the previous year's full release, and were quite often the best *FIFA* games you could buy. Tournament games gave birth to *FIFA*'s new penalty system, the Clubs mode and even fan-favourite Seasons mode. There was even an Ultimate Team-style effort available in *Euro 2008*.

Here, we have a game that plays almost identically to *FIFA 14*, albeit with softer lighting and some crowd effects. It's still a fine game, capable of conjuring magical moments and fierce multiplayer battles, but it's not the source of inspiration it once was. There's a reason the last tournament game was DLC, and perhaps this should have been as well.

Much like England, then, expect fervour, frenzy and excitement, quickly followed by inevitable mild disappointment and a hope for something better in the next generation.

Jon Denton

VERDICT

Still a fine game of football, but starting to show its age. *World Cup Brazil* does a marvellous job of capturing the tournament frenzy, but it's tough to justify the price tag.

69%

IN THIS SERIES △ **2010 FIFA WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA** Another World Cup tie-in that shone in terms of gameplay and presentation but stank of poor value. That said, it did reinvent the penalty system.

Trials Fusion

Welcome to the future

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
RedLynx

PRICE
£15.99

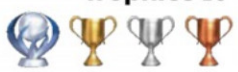
PLAYERS
1-4

AGE RATING
12+

TWITTER
@Ubisoft

INSTALL SIZE
5.2 GB

Trophies 16



PS4

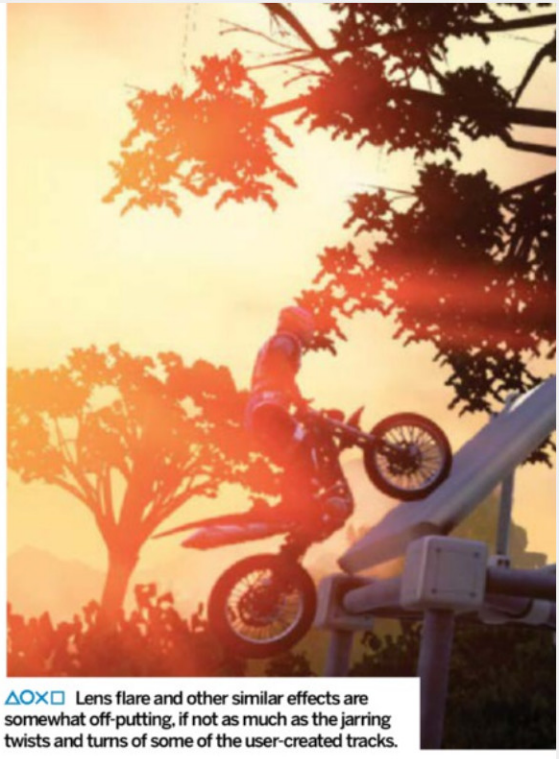
WE LOVE TRIALS. We hate *Trials*. We love *Trials*. We hate *Trials*. And so the cycle continues, our on/off romance with RedLynx's latest physics-based time attack nightmare blasted to either end of the emotional spectrum by every perfectly judged bunny hop, inexplicable bail, moment of perfect throttle control and frustrating oh-so-close moment just shy of a new checkpoint. It's a game of extremes. When it's good, it's *so* good but when it's bad, you'll want to punch every wall that has ever been built.

The good news, though, is that the former massively outweighs the latter. While this marks the franchise's PlayStation debut, RedLynx's bike-based platformer has risen through the ranks from PC unknown to Xbox Live Arcade bestseller, and with good reason. Physics and course design are typically excellent in *Fusion*, with even the seemingly impossible obstacle courses of the endgame made to look like child's play by skilled riders.

It's so simple too, at least in theory – all you need to worry about is throttle, brake and leaning either forward or backwards to angle the bike. That's it. But with each motion comes the risk of the physics engine taking over and ruining your fun. Throw your weight around too much and you'll lose all-important traction; land awkwardly and you'll lose momentum for the next hurdle; lean back up a steep incline or tilt forward while bombing down a hill and you're likely to end up in hospital.

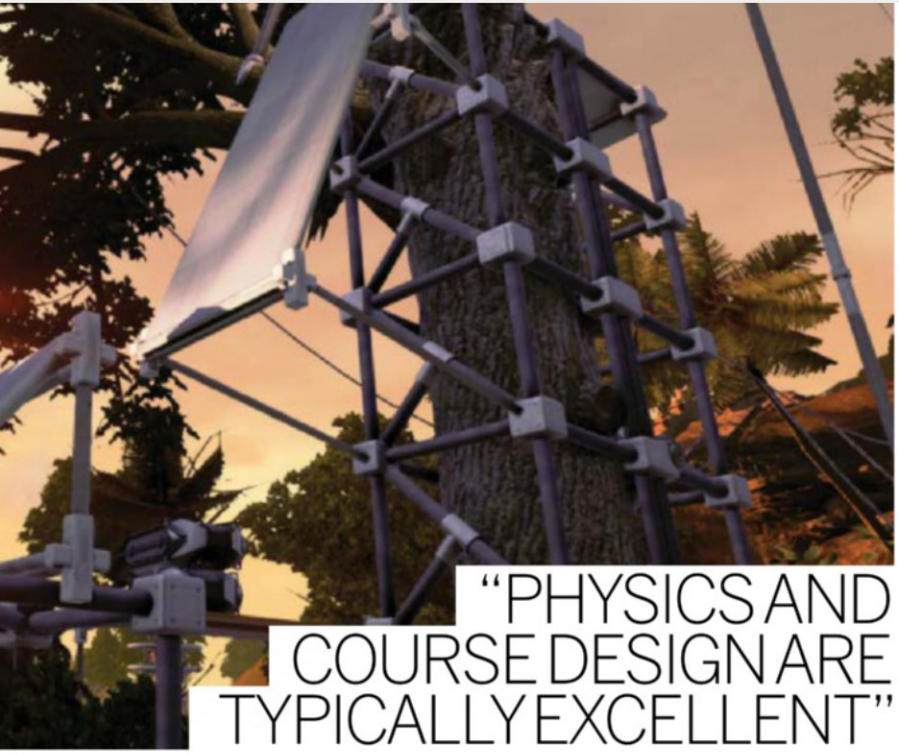
Not that there is actually a hospital in *Trials*, but that place would be constantly at full capacity if there were. When learning courses (particularly the last few, which often appear to be impossible), it's not unusual for the time limit to expire or retries to approach or even hit the cap of 500, at which point the game laughs and tosses you back out onto Main Menu Street. You'll learn from each run, though, and subsequent attempts will edge that figure down until you're looking to put in zero-fault runs, just as several players (somehow) already have on every single course in the game. They're either developers or maniacs, but either way you can't help but admire the skill involved – you can check out the replays of the best riders' runs to get a better idea of how the impossible is meant to be done, but it does feel a little like having a magician explain their tricks to you.

A controversial new addition for *Fusion* is the FMX mode, a *Joe Danger*-esque trick run where risky stunts lead to higher multipliers and huge high scores. Unfortunately, RedLynx's skills in physics and design don't seem to apply quite as well when *Fusion* goes all extreme – the scoring system is shot to hell, landings are frequently chronically misjudged (we've had 'Perfect Landing' pop up after a headfirst crash, among other examples) and even the basic trick controls are flawed. Holding the right stick in a direction initiates a death-defying stunt based on the position of the bike, but tricks must be locked in before flips can be performed or else the rider just flaps around comically in



△○×□ Lens flare and other similar effects are somewhat off-putting, if not as much as the jarring twists and turns of some of the user-created tracks.

△○×□ Backdrops are lush, but we recommend turning off the announcers – their repeating dialogue grates almost immediately and adds nothing.



"PHYSICS AND COURSE DESIGN ARE TYPICALLY EXCELLENT"

the air and no points are awarded. Or, if you're lucky, you accidentally pull off about eight different grabs in sequences without even trying to do so. It's no *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, put it that way.

Having these flimsy events tied into the same campaign as the precise obstacle-packed runs fans will be familiar with is likely to upset some, but dodgy as they may be, they're still not especially tough to get Gold on (if even by mistake) before returning to the bits of the game that are actually good. This includes the returning multiplayer mode, which is a blast against mates but strangely can't be taken online. It's couch competition only, but don't forget that a Vita can be used as a second controller via Remote Play if you fancy giving it a go.

The course editor returns too, as complex and versatile as ever, as well as a tiny bit more user-friendly thanks to a radial menu. It's still way more complex than *LittleBigPlanet*'s equivalent, meaning that most things created with it are pretty awful right now. But give it a few weeks and the community will likely have already gotten to grips with the suite and produced some mind-blowing stuff. *Trials Evolution* had some absolutely ludicrous user-created content, some so inventive that you wouldn't even know you were playing *Trials*. Here's hoping the same bright sparks pull through once again with *Trials Fusion* because as with *LBP*, just browsing, testing and rating user submissions is a game in itself. Mainly because we're just too lazy to actually sit down and figure out how it all works for ourselves, sure, but it's still great fun.

In moving further and further from the purity of the early PC games, *Trials* is starting to lose a little of its edge. While the core gameplay is still excellent, stunt runs, upgradeable vehicles and connectivity with cash-hungry iOS release *Trials Frontier* all nudge *Fusion* further away from that classic, pure game of mastery where only player skill matters. It still *is* that, for the most part, and it's still just as good as ever when it is. We're just slightly concerned that *Fusion* is Ubisoft *just* managing to hold it together and maintain balance on a near-vertical incline – a lean or a rev too far and the next game could be an embarrassing fall from grace.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

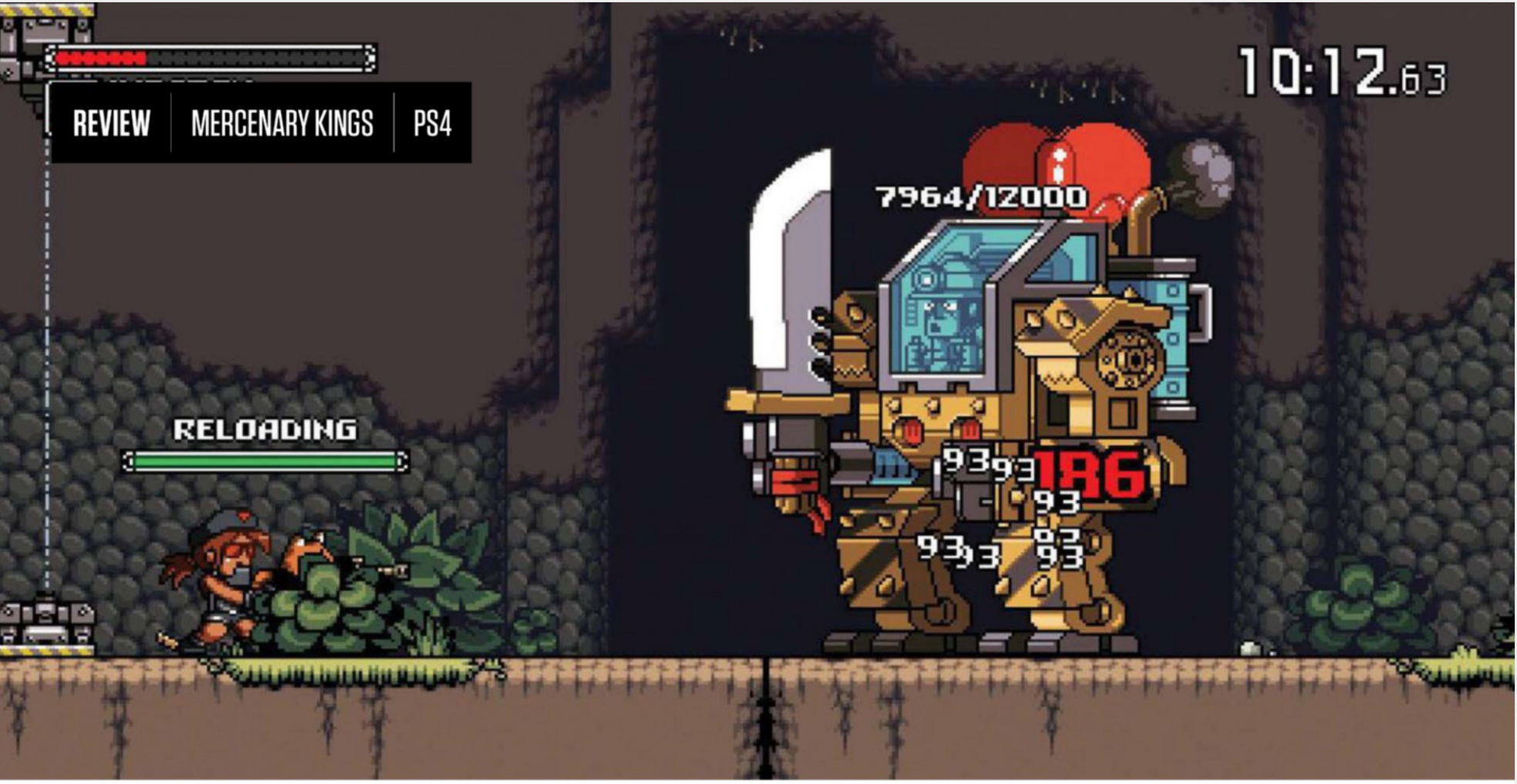
Frustrating and elating in more or less equal measure (depending on your skill), *Fusion* is the usual brilliant skill game with some questionable new features bolted onto it.

80%

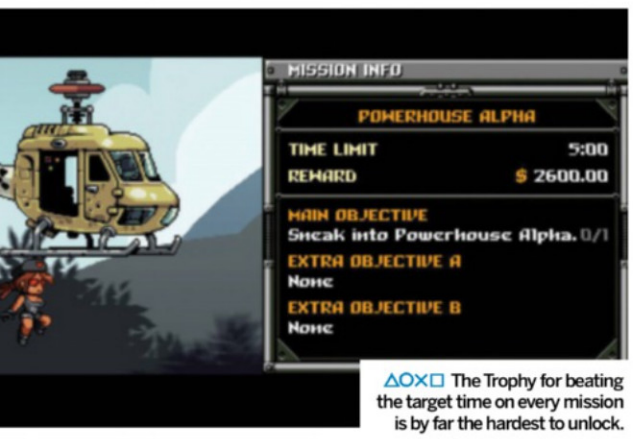
△○×□ The quad bike is just too heavy to be much fun, even if it can get some real pace behind it at times.

△○×□ Multiplayer is still great fun, especially for the mad dash at the end of each race when everyone bails to throw themselves over the finish line.

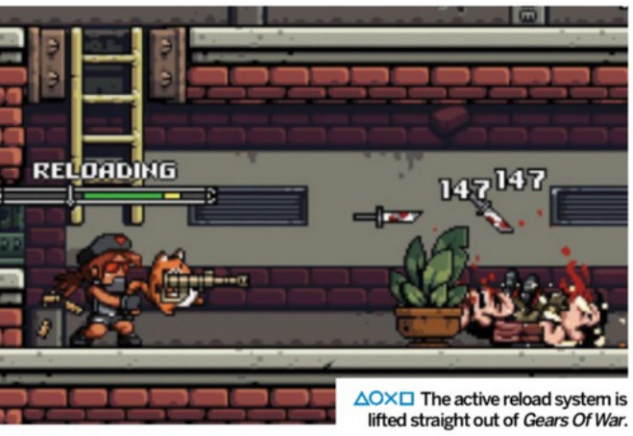
OR YOU COULD TRY △ **MXGP** Full 3D and more simulation than *Trials*'s physics-based arcade fun, but surprisingly rewarding once you can stay on the bike for longer than three seconds.



ΔOX□ We assumed that the cat gun would just be an amusing novelty. We assumed wrong – it's amazing.



ΔOX□ The Trophy for beating the target time on every mission is by far the hardest to unlock.



ΔOX□ The active reload system is lifted straight out of *Gears Of War*.

Mercenary Kings

A shooty, looty beauty

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Tribute Games

DEVELOPER
Tribute Games

PSN PRICE
£11.99

PLAYERS
1-4

AGE RATING
16+

TWITTER
@TributeGames4

INSTALL SIZE
330 MB

Trophies 26

1 7 9 9

MERCENARY KINGS IS a contradiction – a game that simultaneously showcases both *none* of the power of PlayStation 4 and the console's full, *true* power. On the one hand, sit the game next to something like *inFamous: Second Son* and you'd think the host platforms were generations, *decades* apart, not that both games were running on the most powerful console on the market – hell, there are textures in *Second Son* that take up more memory than the entirety of *Mercenary Kings*. But conversely, it's also a great indication of what the new machine can really do, in that it is perhaps the perfect example of Sony's open door policy and intent for the PS4's catalogue to be as varied as possible. Coming off the back of years of publishers championing copycat triple-A 3D action games, the awesome variety to the PS4's catalogue even just six months into the console's life is refreshing to say the least.

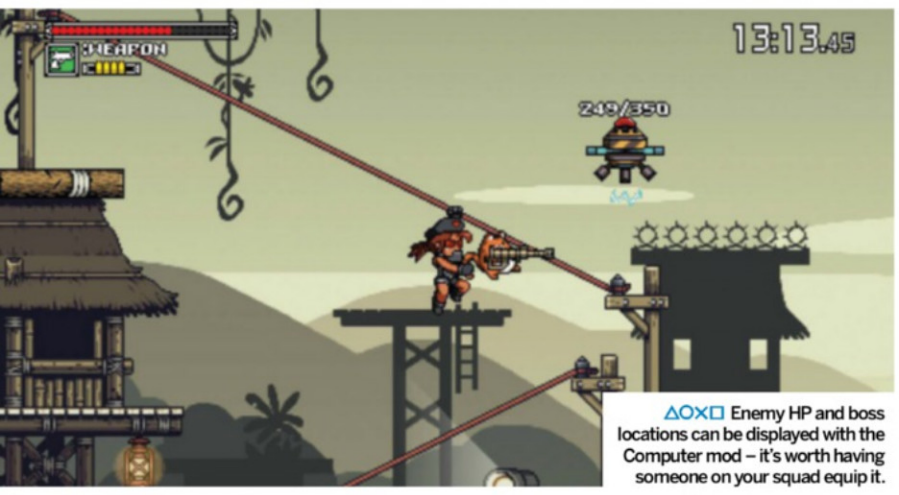
So while some might scoff that this PS Plus freebie looks like a Mega Drive game (which it obviously doesn't – sprite detail and animation are more in line with how you *remember* 16-bit games looking, not how they actually looked), there's a level of depth to the mechanics and intelligence to its design that ensures *Mercenary Kings* is no more out of place in 2014 than any other game that isn't *COD* or *FIFA*. It's nowhere near as simple as its *Metal Slug* mask makes it seem, with sprawling open maps to explore, multiple mission objectives, four-player co-op, loot galore and a comprehensive crafting and customisation system. So yeah, any concerns that it might just be a 'classic' side-scrolling shooter where you just hold right, mash the fire button and hope for the best are shot down pretty damn quickly.

In actual fact, it's almost the opposite of that. It's all about exploration of each of the game's large maps, hunting down materials, rendezvous targets or boss enemies as quickly as possible. There's more than a faint whiff of *Monster Hunter* about the game in this regard, right down to abilities that can track bosses as they roam the map and flee from encounters. This extends further, into the mission structure and even the weapon

OR YOU COULD TRY

METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY Seven classic Neo Geo arcade shooters in one handy package, albeit one that's only available on PSP and PS2.

"NO MORE OUT OF PLACE IN 2014 THAN ANY OTHER GAME THAT ISN'T COD OR FIFA"



△○×□ Enemy HP and boss locations can be displayed with the Computer mod – it's worth having someone on your squad equip it.

customisation once that opens up later on – certain weapon parts require boss loot drops, making farming runs pretty important for building complete sets.

Don't think you have to do this alone, mind – even though there are only two playable characters, *Mercenary Kings* supports four-player co-op so your grind for those rare bits and bobs (and even the common junk, which you'll be burning through far quicker as you craft new gear) need never be boring. The matchmaking isn't the best so playing with friends via the Invite option is the way to go and given that it was free on PS Plus, we can't foresee any trouble finding friends to play with. Everyone gets all the loot as well, which is a fair trade-off for the cash rewards being split between players – money can easily be farmed on your own, but those resources are generally more time-consuming to replenish.

Weapon customisation effectively determines your class, with hundreds of different components that can be built and assembled into the firearm of your dreams. The base part determines what weapon type it'll be but from there, you're free to slap any old nonsense together as you see fit. A sniper barrel will give a shotgun more damage and range; an SMG clip on a rifle could spike ammo capacity at the expense of a little damage; a mismatched muzzle could boost elemental power or ammo affinity for extra damage. It's an incredibly versatile system and while full builds of themed weapon parts look best, you'll usually find that a personal touch will lead to better guns.

Melee weapons can also be crafted, as can game-changing mods that have various beneficial effects – there's even scope for pure melee builds, if you'd rather smack things than shoot them. Weight can be a concern, with heavier gear reducing speed and air control, so it's all about finding a balance between power and mobility. Or just sucking it up and becoming a super-badass tank who can barely move. Your call.

While some bosses can be extremely tricky solo and the structure of the game means it's naturally very repetitive, Mercenary Kings is a perfect little-and-often game – fire it up while something else is downloading, blast through a couple of missions, upgrade your gear then come back to it later to avoid fatigue. As such, we'd have loved to see a Vita release as well, but Remote Play works just fine in lieu of an actual handheld version. If you missed out on *Mercenary Kings* when it was free on PS Plus and have any love for classic side-scrollers like *Metal Slug* and *Contra* (or OCD nightmares like *Monster Hunter*, for that matter), this 21st Century twist on one of gaming's most established templates is a must-play.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Deeper than it looks, *Mercenary Kings* is an addictive modern take on the shooters we grew up with, appealing to nostalgics, hoarders and action fans in equal measure.

85%

Lego The Hobbit

Far over the misty mountains cold, to dungeons deep and caverns old

PS4

ALSO ON PS3 & VITA

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Warner Bros

DEVELOPER
TT Games

PSN PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
1-2

INSTALL SIZE
8.7 GB

AGE RATING
7

TWITTER
@LEGOTheHobbit

Trophies 40

1 4 9 26

THE THING ABOUT *Lego* games is that you can always predict the core elements of the game before you've even taken the shrink-wrap off the case. With *Lego The Hobbit* – similarly to last year's *Lego Marvel Super Heroes* – the team at TT Games has a strong cast of characters to work with. Yes, the bulk of the dwarven cast may be interchangeable bearded clones, but Bilbo, Gandalf and a spattering of cameos liven up the roster enough to make the flitting between playable characters entertaining enough.

The game is most reminiscent of 2012's *Lego Lord Of The Rings*, in both appearance and mechanics – there are a slew of reused assets, but hey, it's okay because that's the point of Lego, right? The main game itself will see you following the unexpected journey of Bilbo and his ragtag dwarven cohort, with the cutscene dialogue and audio lifted directly from the game's movie counterpart. This creates an odd rhythm; the slow, bumbling pace of the levels where you'll find yourself slowly sniffing out puzzle pieces, ambling through platform sections or harvesting crafting pieces contrasts sharply against the lively and noisy cutscenes – the films were made to be action-packed, whistle-stop romps through Tolkien's fantasy realm, while the games were made to be child-friendly platform-puzzles with an emphasis on exploration. These two directions clash, and it creates a distinct arrhythmia that makes the chapters in the game seem unbalanced.

It all looks very nice, though, especially on the PS4 with all the sheen and activity you'll have seen in *Lego Marvel Super Heroes* at launch. We're still impressed by just how many individual blocks the PS4 can render at any one time (this is particularly noticeable when you encounter goblin hordes) and how it all runs so smoothly during the glut of on-screen animation. Individual character models are animated superbly (the Goblin King and Smaug are easy highlights) and the satirical takes on the films will keep you wanting to progress from cutscene to cutscene.

The gameplay itself is the same old tried-and-tested formula we've come to expect from *Lego* games, albeit with a few additional systems that, honestly, serve only to bloat the whole experience. A crafting system has been implemented, in a very RPG-lite fashion: as you go around destroying everything in sight, you can collect raw materials from the barrels or structures you break up. Food, minerals, precious stones and miscellaneous items can all be hoarded as you explore and traded in at certain places to 'craft' items

PLAY VIDEO

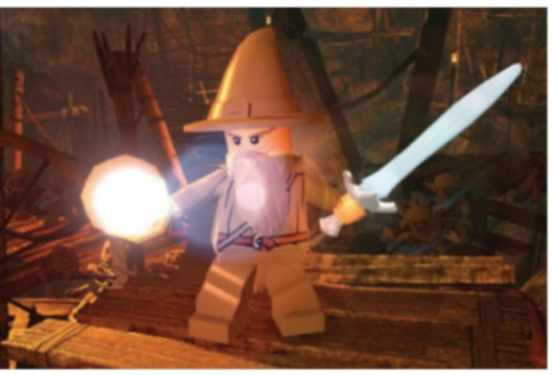
Watch the review on our YouTube channel or your free disc, with team commentary.

YouTube www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

www.imagineshop.co.uk

△○×□ The level design is as tricksy and confounding as you'd expect from a *Lego* game at first glance, but it all makes sense eventually.

△○×□ The reimagining of Tolkien's world in Lego blocks feels as homely and authentic as the movies ever did.



△○×□ The Goblin King is as unappealing in fake plastic as he is in CGI. It's rewarding to stab him repeatedly in the chin, though.

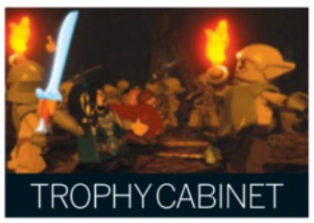
"WE'RE STILL IMPRESSED BY HOW MANY INDIVIDUAL BLOCKS THE PS4 CAN RENDER"

that will help you progress. Thing is, if you haven't got enough of a specific resource at a certain point, you'll have to backtrack and grind, hunting for whatever it is you're missing. This mechanic adds little to the game, and often ends up feeling more like a roadblock than a fun task. We appreciate that TT Games is keen to keep on pushing the *Lego* games, travelling different roads to make sure it doesn't become complacent and churn out the same core game, time and time again. But this endeavour seems more like a misguided attempt at installing longevity than a real push for innovation.

The game is loyal to its licence, though, and anyone that enjoyed the films will have plenty to chew on. The usual *Lego* humour remains – though its been diluted due to the game's reliance on the movie audio tracks – and the ostensibly playable nature of *Lego* platforming is intact. The narrative is beefed up with a wide array of side-quests and collectibles, too, and completionists will rejoice at the need to play every level at least twice in order to Platinum the game.

Since the game insists on sticking so close to its filmic cousin, though, you'll notice the game doesn't... end. You finish the story events that take you to the end of the second film, then get dropped into an open-world free play – the rest of the game is going to drop as DLC when the final instalment of *The Hobbit* releases this winter. This leaves the current version of the game feeling unfinished, and if you haven't read the book then it'll all leave you feeling pretty unsatisfied.

Dom Peppiatt



TROPHY CABINET

EVER 'THE PEOPLES CHAMPION' To complete all the quests in Middle-earth, rush the game first, then go back to each quest with the necessary character.

THE UNASSESSABLY WEATHLY Unsurprisingly, the best place to farm studs is in Smaug's cavern. A few passes there should net you this Trophy.

VERDICT

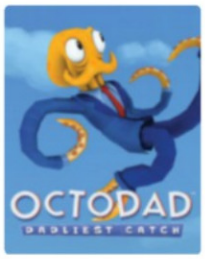
A pretty romp through Tolkien's garden of fantasy, let down by forays into lite-RPGdom; it would've been much better if it had conviction and went fully role-playing *Lego* game.

65%

FOR FANS OF... **LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES** TT Games' reimagining of the Marvel Universe had enough source material to build a Lego world that could function independently, unlike *The Hobbit*.

Octodad: Dadliest Catch

He wears a disguise to look like human guys



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Young Horses

DEVELOPER
Young Horses

PSN PRICE
£11.99

PLAYERS
1-2

INSTALL SIZE
2.7 GB

AGE RATING
3+

TWITTER
@octodadgame

Trophies 20

0	0	0	20

PS4

OCTODAD IS A joke, and how much you enjoy it will depend on how funny that joke is to you. Along with games like *Surgeon Simulator* and *Goat Simulator*, *Octodad* revolves around the natural hilarity that tends to occur when you develop a physics engine and then give your player terrible control over it.

Our titular hero is an octopus pretending to be a human, with a loving wife and two doting children who have no idea of their father's true aquatic nature. It's quite a feat, considering the dude can't talk and *looks like an octopus*. The game revolves around doing things a human does without arousing suspicion, a task made more difficult due to the fact that *you are an octopus*.

Octodad flops around all over the place thanks to not having any bones, which makes even basic tasks like walking extremely difficult for our poor cephalopod. Controls are basic, with the left stick controlling the general direction of your 'arms' while the right stick raises and lowers them. Holding down a shoulder button will raise that respective leg, at which point control switches to the lower extremities. It sounds complicated, but while it might initially confuse you (that's kind of the point) it doesn't take long to start feeling quite natural.

The difficulty comes in how, even when you know the controls, getting Octodad to actually do what you want is never easy. You can't fault the guy for it, but clumsiness is an understatement. This is slapstick comedy in its purest form, as your wild tentacle swings send everything in their path flying and decorations crash down around you. Try to pick up a box of cereal at the supermarket and you'll likely bring down the whole shelf. Trying to climb up a display of boxes is an early highlight that is destined to end badly.

The surreal humour is heightened by the fact that it takes a hell of lot to actually arouse people's suspicions. Instead, most acts of blatant vandalism are merely met with a disapproving tut or a questioning look, a laughably minor reaction to the groom punching his own bride in the face as he tries to place the ring on her finger. A bar along the bottom of the screen fills

△○×□ There is actually a story in *Dadliest Catch*, although it isn't likely to win any awards.

△○×□ Controlling Octodad is quite simple, theoretically. Unfortunately, he doesn't tend to do what you command him to. Silly octopus.

△○×□ The subtitles of Octodad's frenzied burblings are always worth reading for added laughs.

△○×□ The complete obliviousness of everyone else to Octodad not quite being human is effortlessly hilarious.

PLAY CHALLENGE

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...

THE PERFECT WEDDING

△ CAN YOU WALK down the aisle on the first stage without knocking over any podiums? It might take a few tries.

DECOY OCTOPUS

□ CAN YOU BEAT the developer's times on each level? We sure as hell can't. Get ready for frustration!

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

"MOST ACTS OF BLATANT VANDALISM ARE MERELY MET WITH A DISAPPROVING TUT"

as suspicion rises, but it's rare to actually fill it entirely and have to retry a section.

The first problem with *Octodad* is that this is all it is: slapstick stretched out into an entire game. While the developer manages to find a number of new challenges to keep mixing things up, it becomes a bit tiresome. The reason this isn't more an issue is due to the second big problem with the game: its length.

We finished *Octodad* in less than two hours, and for an £11.99 game, that's pretty short. There isn't much replay value beyond replaying stages to get faster times, and that won't appeal to many. There's also a co-op mode, with each player controlling an individual limb. If you've got a bunch of willing mates, this is the most fun to be had with *Octodad*, bringing his drunken stumbling to a cataclysmic conclusion.

There simply isn't much to do in *Dadliest Catch*, and £11.99 is too much for such a brief and limited experience. It's fun while it lasts, sure, albeit simple and one-note. We love the idea behind *Octodad*, but the sad truth here is that the game is generally more fun to watch than it is to play. Which, with Twitch broadcasts more popular than ever, might present something of a problem.

Sam Smith

VERDICT

While undeniably amusing, *Octodad* just doesn't have enough content to make it worth the asking price. Come back when it's on sale, and we might be singing a different tune.

60%

OR YOU COULD TRY △ **GOAT SIMULATOR** If you've got a PC, this purposely buggy, absurd 'simulator' offers similar physics-based slapstick.

"A RICHLY DETAILED WORLD THAT'S A GENUINE JOY TO EXPLORE"

△○×□ Like *South Park*, the game has what seem like great, engaging mechanics, but they ultimately don't make much of a difference in the long run.

Child Of Light

Once upon a time, a game was built with rhymes

PS4

ALSO ON PS3

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montreal

PSN PRICE
£11.99

PLAYERS
1-2

INSTALL SIZE
2.3 GB

AGE RATING
7+

TWITTER
@ChildOfLightUbi

Trophies 20

0 0 1 19

IT'S PRETTY MUCH a given that an RPG will have a nonsense story to tell. Collect an unlikely ragtag group of comrades to fight alongside you to save the world, preferably while having some pretty strong feelings about something in a series of strange locations. That's the formula, and it works. And it's clear that this UbiArt Framework engine, responsible for the recent two stunning *Rayman* games, is capable of wonderfully artistic creations. Flying around the levels as Aurora feels like being in a fairytale, swooping through beautifully painted scenes in a storybook come to life. Expertly presented, *Child Of Light* has unrelenting style, tied together in a detailed world that's a genuine joy to explore. It's just such a shame that the story part of the RPG formula, and the execution of that story, is almost laughably bad.

Hackneyed, forced rhymes persist throughout the entire game. Why, yes, all in rhymes, all of the times! From the start to the end, every character's been penned, to speak only in verse, common sense in reverse. Are you sick of it yet? Something something regret.

Like clipping through scenery or terrible voice acting, the insistence on having every character speak in rhymes is awkwardly off-putting at best and completely takes you out of the game at its worst. From the conversational ("Woah I barely know you/ Do it and I'll show you") to the florid ("This dream is formed of frigid air/Dark spirits fly, I know not where"), it's like being read a GCSE student's heartfelt poetry; you know a lot of time and love and energy has gone into it, but ultimately it's a bit shit and you wish it wasn't happening any more.

That being said, it's thankfully ignorable. The lack of an engaging story with realistic or relatable characters means that this won't ever be an RPG loved by all, but for design and immersion (in the parts with no dialogue, at least), *Child Of Light* delivers. With the bones of the level/world design reminiscent of *Metroid* crossed with *Rayman* if Samus/Rayman could fly, there are also hidden sections to discover,

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△○×□ It's optional as to whether you complete side-quests to have more people in your party, but we're not sure why, as there's really no reason not to have them.

A TOUCHING TALE

One area in which *Child Of Light* excels is with Igniculus, the little firefly guy. Controllable via the touchpad or the other stick, he's actually useful. The touchpad in particular gives him speedy travel across the screen for him to grab you more health in battle, open a hidden chest, or just free some Wishes (like Lums) to go chasing to refill his energy bar. He's also playable with a second controller if you feel the need to play co-op. Igniculus is no Murfy, that's for damn sure.

△○×□ Every location feels like a scene from a storybook that you happen to be wandering through. That's world building done right.

a heap of collectibles and various stunning locations from standard forests and castles to fire caverns and ice palaces.

Straight out of *Grandia*, the battle system is turn-based combat with a casting time. Battles are rarely dull, mostly down to some clever mechanics from Igniculus the little light spirit, offering an engaging tactical approach to what could have been a by-the-numbers aspect to *Child Of Light*. Sadly, the challenge starts to peter out as enemies don't keep up with your level advancement and new skills, We didn't even notice that the final boss battle *was* the final boss battle; it didn't feel as difficult as one of the optional boss battles we encountered earlier in the game.

Still, so much effort has clearly been spent on getting the tone of the artistic direction and the flow of the gameplay right, that when the story does surface to smack you in the face with a load of "Wait, what's going on?" it seems wholly unnecessary, forced in to what is otherwise a great game. The expert level design is practically invisible, you don't feel like you're being pushed or led anywhere; it's so freeing soaring around the world. Shining 'Wishes' – appearing like *Rayman*'s Lums – point out hidden chests and secrets without breaking the flow of flight, while enemies can be evaded until you choose to do battle. But when the utterly ridiculous story does surface, it just hammers home the point that these are one-dimensional characters, and you can't care about them at all because you've been given no reason to, beyond a few poorly narrated cutscenes.

Despite the nonsensical story, the first two-thirds of *Child Of Light* is still genuinely fantastic to play, but the last few chapters really highlight the fact that this is a game that has had so much love and attention given to displaying its world that some of the mechanics have suffered. Certain systems have been included that seem interesting but peter out like the combat, like the Oculi gem-crafting. Along the way, you collect gems for a simple crafting system that provides various buffs and boosts for each character, but it's not particularly deep and once you hit this two-thirds mark, you'll probably have found that you've done all you can with it.

The same is true of the levelling system. Like a simplified version of *Final Fantasy X*'s Sphere Grid, you can get new moves and buffs with points you earn levelling up, but by this two-thirds point of the game, you'll have all the moves you want and you'll just be spamming them. By level 50, you'll be done with everything in the game, fighting enemies that give you a tiny fraction of XP, and then it's necessary to start New Game+ for tougher enemies if you want to finish off the last third of your skill tree, which will be the only thing left to do but you won't need it. Hidden items you've found aren't held over, though, so you'll have to start all that again. It's just such a disappointment that these systems, while engaging for a while, don't seem to go anywhere. *Child Of Light* is beautiful and charming, with a great battle system and vibrant world, but it's frustratingly shallow where it could have been brilliant.

Rebecca Richards

VERDICT

It's still a lot of fun to explore the world and engage with the battles, but *Child Of Light* pushes its whimsy too far. We're still looking forward to seeing the next UbiArt Framework game.

79%

OR YOU COULD TRY △ **GRANDIA** Something of an inspiration for the battle system, *Grandia* is a PlayStation RPG classic that gets character building right.

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle

Now this is a fashion show

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bandai Namco

DEVELOPER
CyberConnect2

PSN PRICE
£44.99

PLAYERS
1-2

INSTALL SIZE
1.3 GB

AGE RATING
12

TWITTER
@BandaiNamcoUK

Trophies 46

1 2 13 30

PS3

WE ARE GOING to start with the claim that the dashingly handsome staff writer responsible for the words you now read is probably the only games journalist in the country who has actually read all of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*. The manga series has been running for over 20 years in Japan and is a huge hit, but still remains almost entirely unknown in the West. Some gamers may be familiar with the last *JoJo's* game to make it over here, a 2D fighter from Capcom released in the late Nineties. Since then we've had nothing, which makes it all the more surprising that Bandai Namco decided to localise and release *All Star Battle* in the West.

All Star Battle is developed by CyberConnect2, the team behind the fantastic *Naruto Ultimate Ninja Storm* games, and fans of those titles will know what to expect. Beautiful graphics, over-the-top special moves and a metric ton of fan service are the order of the day, and we love it.

JJBA: ASB is essentially a 2D fighting game, albeit one with limited 3D movement. The standard *Street Fighter* rules apply, with special moves performed with the same basic quarter-circle motions – this is a game best played with an arcade stick, although it never saw an arcade release. That said, there are no particularly difficult commands, with nothing more challenging than a basic fireball motion, and as such pad players shouldn't have any trouble busting out special moves.

"ALMOST EVERY ATTACK AND POSE IS TAKEN FROM THE MANGA"

Fighting game fans will feel familiar with the various systems at play. Light, medium and heavy attacks all chain into each other (*Marvel*-style), and meter can be spent on super and ultra attacks as well as rapid-cancelling your current move to continue your combo. Sounds pretty standard, right?

The game's most original system is its 'Style' button, although this is similar to the Drive system found in *BlazBlue*. Characters are divided into five different styles, and this button does different things depending on what that style is. Many characters have a 'Stand', a physical representation of their psychic powers (basically, a big glowy monster thing) that can be summoned or dismissed with the style button. Others use the 'Hamon' electricity power that charges up your super meter when you hold down the Style button. A couple of characters are even mounted, the Style button making them get on or off their horse – first time we've seen that in a

△○×□ Fans expecting a deep and complex fighting game may be disappointed, but that's simply not what *All Star Battle* is trying to be.

△○×□ Hopefully the game will sell enough over here to justify Bandai Namco's decision to localise it.

fighting game. The variety in character types is massive, and helps in creating one of the most interesting casts in a fighting game today, whether you are familiar with the series or not.

It also raises some balancing issues, but that isn't as much of a problem as you might think. This isn't a 'proper' fighting game in the way that something like *Street Fighter* is. While *Street Fighter*, *Tekken* and the like are designed to offer balanced, competitive play at a high level, *All Star Battle* exists for one reason alone: fan service. This isn't a deep, balanced fighting game, but it isn't trying to be. That isn't to say it's overly simple, and it's easy to have great multiplayer games and learn decent combos.

But in terms of fan service, the game delivers. It helps that it looks phenomenal, perfectly aping the style of artist Hirohiko Araki. Every action throws up sound effect visuals, and characters constantly strike poses from the manga, all rendered in a cel-shaded style. It really is one of the most stylish PS3 games we've ever played.

There's a lot to do, with a story mode following each of the eight long parts of the manga, a campaign mode which has you levelling up your character and fighting tougher foes, and all the other standard fighting game modes and galleries, including fighting others online. You won't get bored in a hurry.

If ever there was a game intended entirely for fans, this is it. Almost every attack, special move, pose and quote in *All Star Battle* is taken directly from the manga, and the love that CyberConnect2 has for the source material is easy to see. Even the menus are hosted and narrated by obscure characters that only the hardcore will recognise.

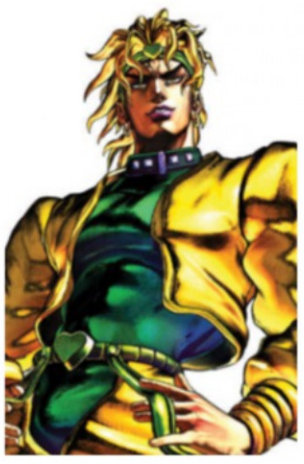
So, for gamers unaware of *JoJo's*, *All Star Battle* will be a fun and stylish, but not particularly deep, 2D fighter. For fans though, it is one of the best examples of a game created to celebrate a long-running franchise. *JoJo's* fans will love *All Star Battle*, but we don't know if there are enough of them in the UK to really justify Namco's decision to bring the game over here. Luckily, we are too busy striking fabulous poses and punching people in the face to worry about it. ORA!

Sam Smith

POSE-OFF! With over 40 characters, there are several strange faces in JoJo's. Here are just a few of them

JOTARO KUJO

The most famous *JoJo's* character, Jotaro is a good starting point for new players, sporting a Stand with a simple moveset that revolves around doing loads of punching.



DIO

The villain from parts one and three, Dio's effects are felt throughout the series and he is as well-known as Jotaro. His super combo involves dropping a steamroller on his opponent.

JOSEPH JOESTAR

Our favourite character, Joseph is the second JoJo who saves the world from the ancient 'pillar men', a race set on ruling humanity. Yeah, this series gets pretty weird sometimes.

JOHNNY JOESTAR

A jockey paralysed from the waist down. When Johnny is knocked off his horse, he can only crawl along the ground. He makes up for this by having a wealth of powerful projectiles.

VERDICT

A fun if arguably quite shallow fighting game for most, but *JoJo's Bizzare Adventure* fans will absolutely adore *All Star Battle*. For those select few, this is utterly essential.

80%

FOR FANS OF... **NARUTO SHIPPUDEN ULTIMATE NINJA STORM 3** Another anime love-letter from CyberConnect2, the gameplay is different but the amazing presentation and attention to detail remains.

"MUCH OF THE STRATEGY COMES IN BEFORE BATTLES EVEN BEGIN"

Destiny Of Spirits

Freedom isn't free

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Q Entertainment

RELEASE DATE
Out Now

PRICE
Free

PLAYERS
1

AGE RATING
7+

TWITTER
@dos_official_en

INSTALL SIZE
801 Mb

Trophies 12

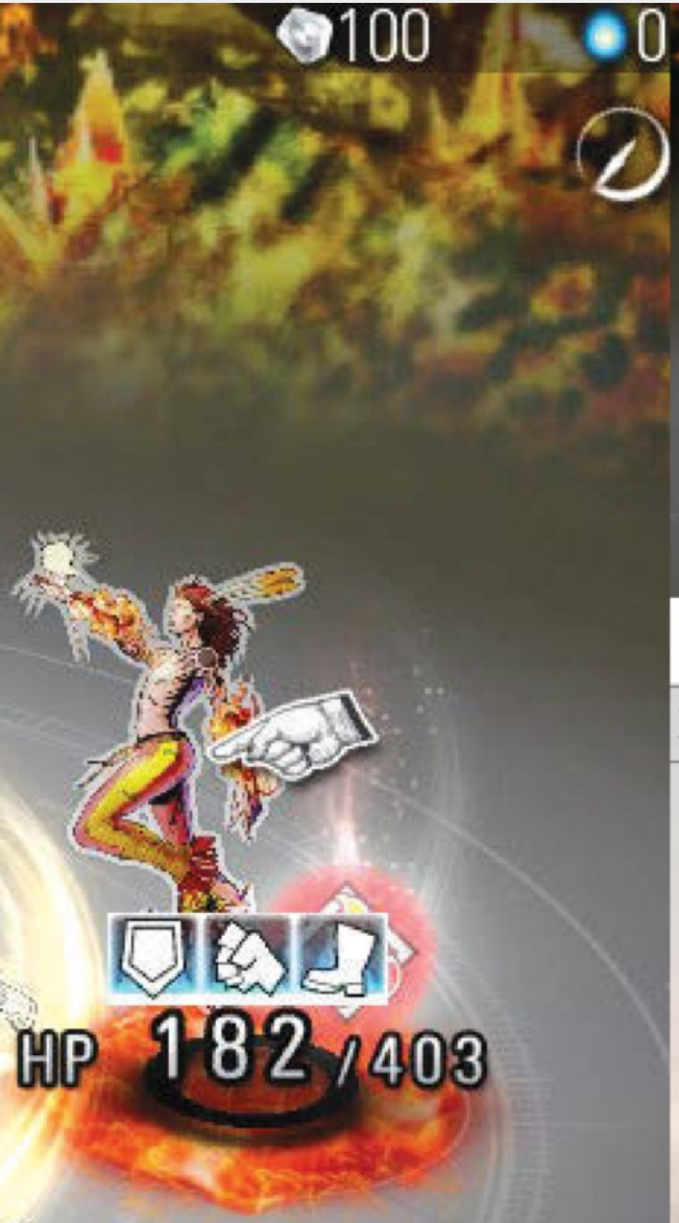
VITA

WHAT, YOU MAY ask, is the point of reviewing free-to-play games? They're right there on the PlayStation Store, just waiting to join your library of games for no more of an investment than a couple of clicks. It's something that we discussed at length when the first wave of F2P games arrived on console and these pages should give you a fair idea of the conclusion we reached. You see, there's still an investment with games like this, whether it be bandwidth, time, hard drive space or microtransactions – sure, you can just grab the games for free but we can still inform and advise as to whether those minutes and hours, MB and GB or pennies and pounds are a shrewd investment in the long run, when there's no shortage of great games to play.

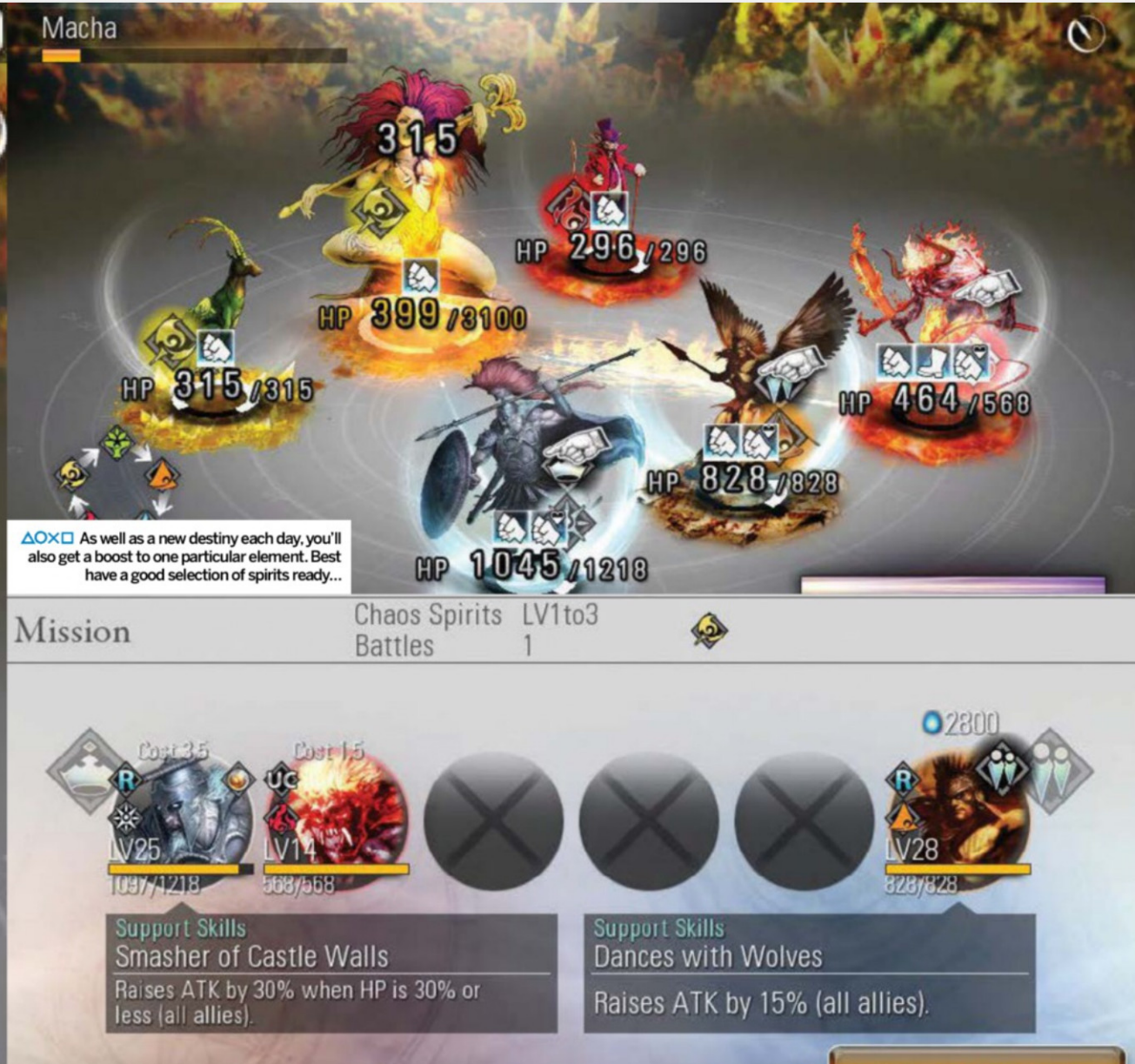
After a slow start, *Destiny Of Spirits* is one of the more generous free-to-play games we've encountered in how much it lets you play in one go. It's an odd blend of trading card game, RPG and strategy, with social aspects thrown in to really mix things up. On a gameplay level, there's not all that much to it – summoned spirits unleash attacks automatically over time, with the only real player input coming in the form of changing attack targets or unleashing special abilities when a gradually regenerating meter allows. Much of the strategy comes in before battles even begin, with the lead spirit conveying a unique bonus that might affect specific elements or the entire party. You'll reach a point where strong groups can be put together to exploit the elemental weaknesses of enemy groups but given how slow the leveling process can be (it's a free-to-play game – what did you expect?), that point is a long time coming.

Mercifully, there are none of the frequent 'pay to win' pitfalls here. Destiny Orbs, the game's premium currency, *can* be used to summon new allies from pools of 'better' spirits than the basic set, sure, but it's primarily used for convenience – restoring party HP or Raid Points spent on tackling bosses when you can't be bothered to wait, expanding the maximum collection size, granting continues after failed battles or even changing your fortune. That last option, while one of the few we've not actually used ourselves, perfectly exemplifies *Destiny Of Spirits*' clever monetisation. Your destiny changes with each real-world day, with Summoning Stones (used for buying new spirits at random from a pool that grows in size as bosses are defeated) and Orbs used for fusing and renting spirits dished out differently depending on your fortune. Once you're invested in your collection, scoring an awesome new Rare spirit on a day where Orbs have all dried up is incredibly frustrating and it takes crazy willpower to accept the fact that the new guy might just have to stay at level one for a day or two when throwing money at the issue can fix it almost immediately.

Whereas so many F2P games monetise greed and laziness, *Destiny Of Spirits* instead preys on collectors and the impatient. Having picked up several bundles of Destiny Orbs so far, though, we never felt unsatisfied with our purchase, and at no point was a spend forced upon us – some 80 hours in, it's probably only



△○×□ Bosses quickly get tough, although Raid Bosses can be attacked by multiple players at once and all share in the rewards.



△○×□ As well as a new destiny each day, you'll also get a boost to one particular element. Best have a good selection of spirits ready...

right that we throw a little cash at a game that, despite its simplicity, has managed to hold our attention for longer than most full-price releases. Free games tend to ration play-time fairly strictly, which might go some way towards explaining why *Destiny Of Spirits* is so addictive. Playing for more than an hour at a time feels almost like cheating the system, like winning at a carnival sideshow, like stealing fun and there's no way you'll want to stop once you find your flow. Even just dipping back in every day is rewarded, with Orbs, Stones and spirits offered to those willing to make repeat visits. It really is remarkable that a game with so little substance has us quite so hooked, but it really is horribly addictive.

With so many novel ideas presented – from the ability to summon spirits based on real world GPS travel data (great news for commuters) to picking daily partners with both receiving summons – it's fair to say that *Destiny Of Spirits* never feels like a con. It's a legitimate game, albeit one that nails the freemium format far better than it does gameplay. For all its shortcomings in that department, mind, it's testament to the design quality of the package that we've gladly offered coming up 100 hours and a fair chunk of digital dollar for the privilege of playing. A reliance on having a permanent network connection could prove problematic to some players (or indeed all players, if the server issues plaguing the game at the time of writing persist), while the minimal nature of the battle interaction will likely turn yet more away. Overcome these issues, though, and Q Entertainment's latest is a great example of free-to-play done right, even if seeing that for yourself might take a good few hours of 'play'.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

There's not a great deal to it but even so, *Destiny Of Spirits* still manages to be an addictive social RPG. We look forward to seeing how it evolves and improves over time...

76%

△○×□ Fusing identical spirits grants additional stat boosts – fine with Uncommons and manageable with some Rares but expensive as hell for special spirits.

OR YOU COULD TRY **FINAL FANTASY X HD** Square's RPG is substantially more involved than *Destiny Of Spirits*, but also substantially less free. Both are worth playing, though.

REVIEW ROUND-UP

HEARTHSTONE IS KIND of a big deal right now but since Blizzard is in no rush to bring that noise to console, you might need to look elsewhere for a TCG fix on PlayStation. *Magic* is as solid a bet as ever, but Konami has turned in its best offering yet with **YU-GI-OH! MILLENNIUM DUELS [1]**. It's every bit as complex and impenetrable as ever, but with over 6,000 cards to collect – so pretty much every card that has ever been printed for the physical card game – you can be damn sure that there's potential for a deck that perfectly gels with your personal play-style. Assembling it could be another matter entirely, though. The starter deck is a joke (when is it not in these games?) and extra cards are dished out both stingily and at random, meaning that getting anything close to a tournament-level decklist is going to take *months*. It's the 21st Century, mind, so you're still free to fork out for theme decks for a couple of quid a pop if you'd rather fast-track your way to a deck that isn't a struggle, if you can ever even get one without paying with this many random cards up for grabs. Despite a few familiar issues such as weak AI and enemy decks that ignore the current banlists, it's structurally great and there's more than enough content here – you just have to put the time and/or money in to get at it all properly. Which the devoted will no doubt do, but some will maintain that's just not cricket.

On that subject, our next game is... an obscure Taiwanese fighting game that just randomly appeared on PSN. Wait, that didn't work at all. Sorry. Still, **CHAOS CODE [2]** is worthy of mention for numerous reasons. There's the fact that it just materialised out of nowhere, and in the same week as *BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma* finally decided to rock up on these digital shores, too. There's the fact that one of the characters is a chef called Bravo who beats opponents with sausages and flips tables at the sight of fast food. Or there's the fact that it's just £7.99, a price point at which you can easily excuse the lack of online play and additional modes if you're a fan of the genre. It's like an entry level *Melty Blood* or, to reference a game more than two of you have heard of, an Easy Mode *King Of Fighters* – links and combo timings are as generous as the genre gets and while it might not look like much, *Chaos Code*'s combo-friendly engine is great fun to experiment with. And at less than the price of a takeaway pizza, you're basically getting your money's worth even if you just binge on it for an evening then forget you ever bought it. Give it a bash – at this price, it doesn't even really matter if it doesn't knock you for six.

Speaking of which... no, we've done it again. **SOULCALIBUR: LOST SWORDS [3]** features a grand total of zero batsmen, and it doesn't even offer the usual *SC* creation suite with which you could

△○×□ Some of the super attacks in *Chaos Code* have to be seen to be believed. Meat slaps, wedding bells, Marilyn Monroe impersonations... it's all here.

2

"IT'S STRUCTURALLY GREAT AND THERE'S MORE THAN ENOUGH CONTENT HERE"

1

△○×□ Deck lists are awarded the first time you beat one of the 80 opponents. Collecting all the needed cards to actually *make* it, though, will take ages.

build a budget Batman and pretend you misheard the ongoing string of completely spontaneous cricket references. It's a free-to-play, single-player only game which, on paper at least, makes it sound like the worst fighting game ever made. But *SoulCalibur* is one of the few franchises in the genre that boasts a solid solo history, the Weapon Master modes offering various different ways to play and loads to unlock in the process. So yeah, *Lost Swords* is that, basically, just with a little more F2P sauce squirted all over it than we'd like. Mechanically it's surprisingly good. But with move lists that have been butchered since *SCV*, play limited by a stamina gauge of sorts that recovers over time, simplified special attacks and grinding galore to do if you want to even get close to upgrading weapons and gear or unlocking the additional characters, *Lost Swords* serves as little more than a 3.5GB reminder of how good *SoulCalibur V* actually was.

And finally, since it's apparently impossible to find a good segue into a quick review of a cricket game, we'll just go right ahead and say that **DON BRADMAN CRICKET 14 [4]** is the best digital approximation of the sport on PS3. Not that that's saying much – this isn't exactly the most hotly contested market in gaming and as such, the game is still worlds away from the lofty production values of the likes of *FIFA* or 2K's *NBA* games. Beneath the frankly nasty visuals, though, is a surprisingly deep and technical simulation. The pages and pages of controls, commands and modifiers (including the ability to clean the ball when bowling, or appeal decisions you don't agree with) should give you some idea of the level of detail we're talking about here – it's pretty daunting, much like going into any modern sports game blind, to be honest. Whether or not cricket actually lends itself well to gaming in the first place is another matter entirely (it's a bit on the long-winded side, is cricket) but if you're looking for the slowest sports game on the market – and one where the announcers can call your created cricket hero 'Fishboy' or 'Captain Grumpy' – you've come to the right place.

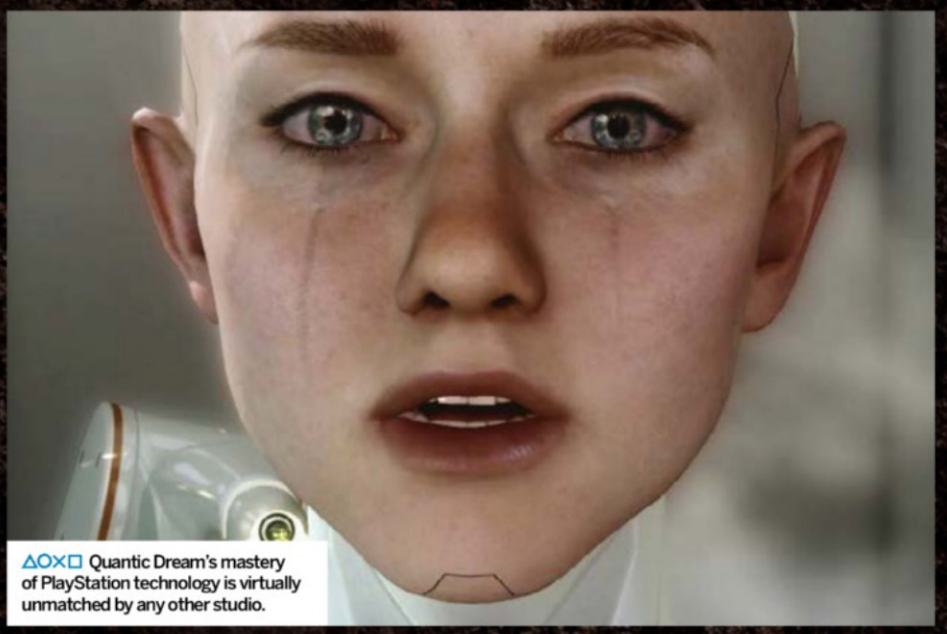
△○×□ **Soul Break an opponent and you'll knock their armour off, leaving them to fight in their undies.**

△○×□ **Will he catch it? What if he drops it? Will this match ever end? Good lord, cricket is exciting.**

DAVID *CAGE*

Fahrenheit. Heavy Rain. Beyond: Two Souls. These are some of the most divisive videogames in recent history, and David Cage is responsible for them all. He's loved and hated. Some critics applaud his knack for melodrama, his unique approach to controls and mechanics. Others bemoan his writing style and question whether his games are even games at all. Let's see what the man himself has to say...

△○×□ Performance capture is key to making games like *Beyond* look and feel as realistic as possible.



△○×□ Quantic Dream's mastery of PlayStation technology is virtually unmatched by any other studio.

Like him or loathe him, in an industry that seems to pride itself on bland commercialism, Cage at least stands out. He's managed to cultivate a style of development that is completely his own. The peculiarities of his work – restricted interactivity, lots of dialogue – might not be for everyone, but at least they're distinct. Whether it's rambling praise or internet vitriol, David Cage gives people something to talk about. In a climate of me-too eight out of ten shooters, that stands for something.

Now, with his work on the PlayStation 3 behind him and his studio, Quantic Dream, busy building something secret for the PS4, Cage is ready to reflect. He knows what people think of him. But his job, he says, isn't to please everyone.

"I try to provide interesting interactive experiences and, at the same time, learn how to make them better," he says. "Even if it means being some kind of alien to the game industry, I want to experiment and try new ideas. I have criticisms of myself, things that I wish I could have done differently or better, but I rarely have regrets. I'm trying to understand this new language we have to tell interactive stories.

△○×□ Cage's work fuses gaming with Hollywood, and it seems like he gets the best of both worlds...

"See, our industry has defined interactivity as performing physical actions, like shooting or jumping, in loops. So, for many people, my games are not real videogames because they don't fit into this restrictive idea of interactivity. My characters don't carry guns or shoot every person they meet. They lead normal lives and do mundane things. They have emotions and relationships. This, to me, is what interactivity is about – creating real empathy between a player and their character. But games are a very conservative industry. It's hard to convince hardcore players to accept these new kinds of interactivity."

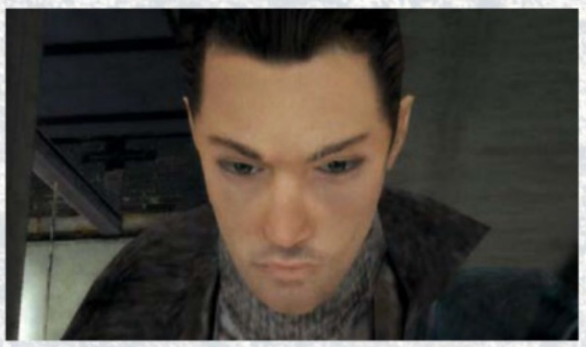
Cage's reservations are understandable. We live in an age where mega-franchises like *Call Of Duty* and *Assassin's Creed* are the face of videogames. But originality is far from dead. Games have always existed in a state of flux. *Wolfenstein 3D*, when it launched, was a new kind of interactivity, so were *Resident Evil*, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Grand Theft Auto*. Despite the ubiquity of war shooters nowadays, originality will always survive.

The work that Cage and Quantic Dream produce represents something intrinsic to videogames: experimentation, forward thinking, a willingness to test new water. Games didn't grow into a billion dollar industry because of sequels to *Space Invaders*. Likewise, they won't survive by pumping out cookie-cutter shooters and platformers.

"Even when you fail, you learn something," Cage tells us. "I always want to experiment and try new ideas. Sometimes I find gold, sometimes I find stones, but I could never see myself just making 'products' that I know people want to buy. I have tons of criticisms of myself. But I stay true to what I believe in."

"I ALWAYS WANT TO EXPERIMENT AND TRY NEW IDEAS"

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



DAVID GASMAN – Lucas from *Fahrenheit* appeared in *Heavy Rain* and also provided the voice of Rayman in *Rayman 2*, *Rayman 3* and *Rayman Arena*.

PASCAL LANGDALE – You might recognise *Heavy Rain*'s Ethan as the guy from the Lottery adverts. He's also appeared in *Ultimate Force* and *Extras*.

ELLEN PAGE – The *Beyond* star will of course be appearing in the upcoming *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*. She's also directing her first film.

△○×□ Cage is known for his hands-on approach, ensuring that his vision makes it from script to screen.

Like the folk music of the Sixties and the New Hollywood films of the Seventies, Cage's games, though often flawed, are part of a transition to something new, something exciting.

"At the moment, we use videogames as a toy," he says. "But they have potential to be meaningful. By far, videogames are the most fascinating medium that mankind has ever created. They have a power to make you think in ways that films and books have not achieved.

"So, my goal over the past years has been to develop a new approach to narrative. Instead of thinking of a 2D script, like a film, which moves through just time and space, I've tried to develop a 3D script, that operates through time, space and interactivity."

Cage's approach is original and it's blossomed over the past console generation, not just in his games, but also in the independent scene and in other mainstream releases. But as well as liberating, writing games like this can be frustrating, he says, with scripts often winding up at over 2,000 pages.

"You want to come up with great characters and emotional situations, but at the same time, you have to deal with choices, consequences, variables and other things relating to structure. It's frustrating because you know players will only see a portion of what you produced. Also, with such a large script, it's difficult to tailor every single word and make each moment absolutely perfect. You can't be picky like you would if you were making a 90-minute film."

Beyond: Two Souls is Cage's latest narrative effort. But it's *Heavy Rain*, his first PS3 title, from 2010, that he seems most proud of. A scene early in the game features a recently divorced father, Ethan, taking care of his son Shaun after picking him up from school. Mundane, intimate and wholly original, it's the best example of what Cage wants to achieve, and his personal favourite moment from all his games so far.

"I like this scene because it's the player himself who gets to decide what kind of father Ethan is. He can be a caring father who makes sure his son does his homework and goes to bed on time, or he can be depressed and sit upstairs, leaving his son on his own.

"Emotion in games is currently very marginal and we tend to focus on the same things: stress, fear, excitement, power. But in this scene you have sadness. You have this father and son struggling to communicate. Playing with different emotions in games – empathy, discomfort, sadness and so on – is what interests me most. We can do much more than we currently do."

△○×□ As far as tech demos go, *The Dark Sorcerer* is easily one of the most impressive we've ever seen.

So with *Heavy Rain* and *Beyond* behind him, where can Cage go from here? Though it's true some games are still struggling with adolescence, since 2005 and Quantic Dream's first major success, *Fahrenheit*, videogaming has dramatically matured. First-person shooters and platformers are still the publisher's bread and butter, but independent, idiosyncratic and narrative-led games are creeping more and more into the mainstream. Look at *The Last Of Us*, or *The Walking Dead*. Despite plenty of repeat prescription shooters still making it to shelves, games are breaking out right now. Decent narratives and fleshed out characters are not the unique selling points they used to be. Cage's creative revolution is already underway.

He isn't worried about going out of fashion, but nor is he optimistic. Despite the leaps and bounds games have made in the past decade, Cage, looking

STANDOUT CAGE MOMENTS

ATTACK OF THE INVISIBLE SPIDERS

One of the crazier moments in Cage's games. Lucas, the leading man of *Fahrenheit*, has a violent hallucination while at work that he's being attacked by gigantic spiders. Cue a frankly outrageous sequence where players have to beat the bugs by jumping over office cubicles and attacking them with a fire extinguisher.

ETHAN AND SHAUN

Cage's favourite, a melancholic, low-fi scene between a depressed father and his distant son. Players can either help do the kid's homework or trudge upstairs for a cry. Straight out of a Mike Leigh film, this one.

THE INVISIBLE FRIEND

A truly creepy scene from *Beyond: Two Souls*, where infant Jodie interacts with her ghostly companion Aiden for the first time. Features a brilliant jump scare involving a living doll with its head on backwards.

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△○×□ Don't use the magic FBI glasses too much or you'll end up bleeding all over the place.

forward, is cynical. There's still, he says, a lot of work to be done.

"My opinion is that we have nothing in games that gets anywhere near to a good film in terms of narrative or characterisation. Games focus on simple themes and target a teenage audience. They could become meaningful. They could have the power to move a larger audience. But it would take new paradigms, a shift to privileging meaning over action and a lot more power given to talented people for that to happen.

"And the more things go on, the more I doubt things will change. To be honest, we are very few people in the world, thinking this way. Maybe incremental changes, step by step, could make a difference, but I will probably be dead by the time it happens."

Despite his pessimism, Cage has a brand new canvas to work with in the shape of the PlayStation 4. And with the congregation of narrative and ostensible art games growing ever larger, surely, in the next few years, his development style is going to become more popular, more accepted.

When reading about the astronomical sales figures of the latest *COD*, or the sexism and homophobia in the new *Grand Theft Auto*, it's easy to get despondent about videogames. Television and newspapers particularly are always prepared to write games off as puerile and irrelevant, even dangerous. But the fact is, emotional clout, meaning and originality have never been hard to come by. Even in the darkest days of triple-A mania, titles like *Limbo* and *Braid* managed to find an audience. It's not as bad as all that.

David Cage is definitely an out-there voice in the world of videogames, but contrary to his doubts, the industry is not up against him. Criticism is healthy. A mixed reaction is better than apathy. And just as they always have, players, deep down, still want something new to play. However bleakly he sees things, Cage says he's going to keep fighting.

> "GAMES ARE THE MOST FASCINATING MEDIUM THAT MANKIND HAS CREATED"

"This work is always fascinating, always challenging. I still think there should be games for all, games for different people who have different expectations. I wish I could learn and work faster, and have more courage to do more crazy things. Game after game, I try to explore boundaries. I believe you could make a very unique experience by doing an interactive Shakespeare play.

"So, although there is strong resistance from the games industry when it comes to considering different creative directions, I love lost causes. It's probably my romantic French side."

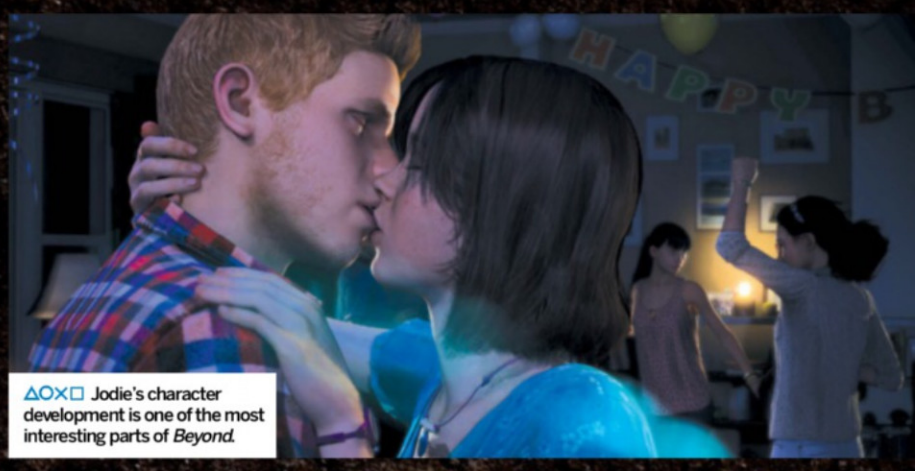
There's a scene in *Fahrenheit* where your character needs to take headache pills, and the packet warns not to swallow them with alcohol. Of course, you want to see if the game is true to its word, so you wash the aspirin down with a mouthful of vodka. It's game over The mix of booze and pills was indeed deadly. But at least you tried it.

Doing something different and acting kind of weird might not always produce the best results. But you won't know until you try. You won't appreciate what works until you've tried something that doesn't. *Fahrenheit*, clearly, wants to encourage your experimental side, and in an image, this is what David Cage is doing. He's asking you to be a part of his experiment, to try something out and worry about the results later. That kind of attitude is at the heart of videogames. It's why we have portal guns, sprawling open worlds and a game where you play as the wind. Whether you like his work or not David Cage has the right attitude, and here and now is the perfect time for him to be making games.

QUANTIC DREAM
A BRIEF HISTORY

David Cage (real name David de Gruttola) founded Quantic Dream in France in 1997. The studio's first game, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*, launched for Dreamcast and PC in 1999 and is notable, mainly, for featuring original music by David Bowie.

The team followed that up with supernatural murder-mystery *Fahrenheit* in 2005, which set the template for Cage's trademark style of interactivity and QTEs. The studio made its PS3 debut with *Heavy Rain* in 2010, another murder-mystery, and followed that with last year's *Beyond: Two Souls*, about a psychic CIA agent played by Ellen Page. The studio is currently working on a PS4 game, though details on that are yet to come.



△○×□ Jodie's character development is one of the most interesting parts of *Beyond*.

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE...

LA NOIRE
Murder, intrigue and a slew of familiar faces from TV and film. A very Cagey game.

DEADLY PREMONITION
As weird and out there as anything Quantic Dream has produced, and experimental in the extreme.

PUBLISHER SONY | **DEVELOPER** SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO | **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2

RELEASE DATE 22 MARCH 2005 | **PLAY SCORE** 90% | **METACRITIC SCORE** 94/100

The Making Of... GOD OF WAR

The first action-adventure from Sony Santa Monica, God Of War was a violent, destructive tornado of fresh air. Rebecca Richards finds out from God Of War director David Jaffe just what it was that made the game so epic, and why it still holds up today

△○×□ Bosses were well considered by the God Of War team to make sure they weren't just mythologically sound, but impressive to fight.

In 2005, it was all a bit quiet in the action-adventure genre or, at the very least, it was all rather refined. Sure, there was the excellent *Devil May Cry* series, on its third instalment, all moody architecture and skill-based violence with a wink and a flourish. And in horror, *Silent Hill* was still succeeding superbly at creeping us the hell out, while *Metal Gear* reigned supreme in the sneak-'em-up genre. *GTA* was doing irony, and the nastiest game to date was probably *Manhunt*. There were several established franchises around to cater to our various videogame desires, but none were simply embracing violence with a sense of daring, tongue-in-cheek fun.

With the increase in power from the PlayStation to the PS2, games could push violence and gore further than they ever had been. It was time for something new. We wanted spurting blood, mangled limbs, heads being ripped off bodies. Hilarious, bloody, brutal violence, on a console that could deliver a more realistic experience than we'd ever seen. Enter *God Of War*, the "action-adventure set in the Louisiana swamps and bayou about voodoo and supernatural powers." Wait, what?

As *God Of War* director David Jaffe recalls, an open-world first-person game called *Dead Man* was one of several paths that *God Of War* could have gone down when it was still in development discussion. "[*Dead Man*] wasn't survival-horror, it wasn't so slow-paced," says Jaffe. "I liked the idea of doing an open-world, first-person game and there hadn't been a lot of those at the time." Despite how well *God Of War* fits into the PS2's history, perfectly filling the hardcore action-adventure gap with its seething protagonist and epic setting, it seems it wasn't such a clear decision. "I still have a document showing the very adult, edgy and violent version of what this game could be which is obviously what it became, but also all the way down to sort of Disney's *Hercules*... maybe we'd do something that was a little more *Mario*," recalls Jaffe. Resisting the temptation to put Kratos in dungarees and a big hat, it was eventually the scale of what they would be able to achieve with the game that was the deciding factor.

"I think it was ultimately was Ken Feldman, who was the art director, who said that out of all of the ideas, it was the *God Of War* universe that we'd best be able to realise in a really spectacular way. That was when we finally said 'f*** it, let's go with this one'," clarifies Jaffe. The dense mythological Greek setting is not necessarily one that springs to mind for a game like this, but on closer inspection, the violence and the melodrama are a perfect match. "It might just have been that people who had explored Greek mythology in the

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△○×□ Despite the graphics obviously looking somewhat outdated now, the mechanics of *God Of War* still hold up.

past hadn't added that commercial layer to it and without it, I can see a developer or publisher seeing the historical angle as being stale and boring. I don't agree with it, but I can see how a marketing person could look at it and say that," says Jaffe. "As a kid, I'd seen and read the kind of family-friendly Greek mythology but I was reading Edith Hamilton to research a lot of this stuff before we went into development and the stories themselves can be easily read to be very gruesome and violent. It was definitely a good fit."

"I WANTED IT TO ACTUALLY FEEL LIKE YOU WERE GOING ON A JOURNEY"

Taking certain liberties with the myths and legends of Ancient Greece, *God Of War* nonetheless realised a world that was rich with blood, betrayal and vengeance, giving the player an epic sense of scale and accomplishment. "I hated games that promised that they were going to send you on this great adventure but then it was just another room that looked like the last 20 rooms you'd been in only with a different configuration of enemies. I wanted it to actually feel like you were going on a journey," says Jaffe, highlighting a key component of what made *God Of War* so awesome. As the games in the franchise have done ever since, *God Of War* began by throwing you right into the action with an epic-feeling battle. 'You know games, right? Well, get on with it then!' seemed to be the message. 'Also, fight some hydras. Like, right now.' By beginning the game in the middle of a war with such intensity, there was the immediate worry that there would be nowhere to go but down, but *God Of War* just kept pushing and pushing the spectacle, using the mythology to make each location memorable.

Still, while Jaffe describes the creative visuals they could get from the mythology, he also stresses that graphics and spectacle weren't the most important aspect of the game for him. "I wanted our games to stand up even after the visuals aren't as hot as they once were, where the core mechanics are something you could come back to ten years later and say 'Okay, it's really rough but f***, it's still really fun'. I don't think I've achieved

BLUFFER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know in five facts

1 It began with the concept "What if Paul Verhoeven had directed *Clash Of The Titans*?"

2 Despite being the first in the series, *God Of War* is actually the third game chronologically.

3 David Jaffe, the director, was also the designer and one of the writers on the project.

4 Voice actor for Kratos, Terrence C Carson, has also worked on shows like Afro Samurai.

5 The Hades section with the spikes was the only section that wasn't properly focus-tested.

△○×□ QTEs are incorporated pretty seamlessly, creating a strong cinematic feeling.

△○×□ The blades are great, levelling up from easy attacks to crazy swinging nonsense.

STANDOUT MOMENT

Taking Revenge On Ares

"The monster you created has returned... to kill you"

When Pandora's Box gigantifies you to be a suitable match for that smug sonofagod Ares, it's ridiculously good fun stomping around in the Aegean sea, even if Ares does pull a Scarecrow on you and give you visions of your dead family. But it's all fine because you get a massive sword to fight him with. "A lot of people hated the final boss fight because we introduced a brand new weapon during that boss battle, but I f***ing love that to this day... I didn't want to do another boss battle that just challenged all the skills you already knew," reveals Jaffe.

FURTHER READING

OLDER – Devil May Cry

With a heavy focus on combat and dramatic storytelling, *Devil May Cry* lies on the fancy coat end of the action-adventure spectrum.

NEWER – God Of War: Ascension

The latest instalment in this brilliantly violent franchise came out in March 2013, scoring a not too shabby 90% here in **Play**.

that yet but working with [*God Of War*] showed me that, for me, that was sort of the North Star to follow. If you just chase the spectacle, the applause you get for it is pretty f***ing cheap." As many PS2 developers got caught up in the heady world of 3D graphics and more powerful tech, gameplay often got left by the wayside. Not so with *God Of War*.

God Of War still holds up today as having some of the most visceral and engaging combat, and while the newer games can be more visually explicit, that feeling of violent engagement with the world has been a solid thread from the very beginning. "I like violent stuff," says Jaffe, simply. "I like that fun, over-the-top, acrobatic violence in moves and games. But I remember being very clear about the fact that we'd have to make sure that this was brutal and intense because if we didn't add that layer, it would look like you were just a dude running around in a helmet and a toga." With personalised death animations for different enemies, QTEs for even more violent kills, strings of badass-looking combos and various weapons and magics for disposing of those in your way, Sony Santa Monica succeeded. Kratos was no dude in a helmet and toga – he was a furious force to be reckoned with, giving the player a tangible sense of empowerment not only through his moveset, but his attitude towards those around him, and the way that the violence was displayed.

God Of War's violence was undeniably cinematic, as Jaffe intended. "The summer of '81 that *Clash Of The Titans* came out and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* had come out and when you look at *God Of War*, there's clearly a great deal of influence from both of those films." Not only the story but the violence itself was presented as spectacle, and one that gave the player a visual reward for mastering the various techniques. Along with the intensely dramatic soundtrack to accompany the action, there were several other techniques employed, like the camera drawing closer whenever a specialised kill took place. This tight structure to *God Of War*, including using fixed camera angles (however frustrating they could be) meant that a more storyboarded film-like angle could be

△○×□ The camera draws closer on the animations for different enemies, giving you a real visceral sense of impact.

taken, forcing the player to feel the scale of the gods, the vastness of the desert, the epic battle raging in Athens exactly the way that Santa Monica meant them to.

"It was brutal but it was so important," says Jaffe, describing the playtests that they would run to get this feeling right. "We would videotape every play-test we did and had like eight monitors in Sony Santa Monica. I would go home at the weekends, even though I had sat through the playtests, and just watch them frame by frame – well okay, not frame by frame but moment by moment – and just fill notepads." It evidently worked, as the end result is a game that holds together at every level, exactly the game it set out to be, from combat to visuals, the soundtrack to the story.

God Of War managed to achieve what only a handful of standout games achieve; it distilled the essence of gaming down to pure fantasy fulfilment, placing the player firmly in the driving seat with empowering mechanics and tight gameplay. Despite the admittedly infrequent sections that put women in their clichéd game roles of damsels, whores and dead wives, *God Of War* is a game that taps into humanity as a whole, excluding no one from enjoying the aggression it still does so well. What *God Of War* and its bellowing, enraged protagonist did so successfully was to access that part of us that relishes violence without actual pain, the spectacle of human drama brought to life through myth and storytelling and ripping the heads off things.

"I LIKE VIOLENT STUFF. I LIKE THAT FUN, OVER-THE-TOP, ACROBATIC VIOLENCE IN MOVIES AND GAMES"

ANGER MANAGEMENT

"I wanted to blow his head off"

For those of you who don't know *God Of War* director David Jaffe, he's, uh, somewhat outspoken. When we asked him about getting the most out of the PS2, he had this to say: "All I can tell you is that whenever I asked for something or heard a great idea from the team, most of the time a month later it was in the game. They were a pretty impressive group to work with. They were a pain in the ass to work with, and I'm sure they'd say the same about me... I'd work with Tim [Moss] again, I don't know if he'd work with me but I respect him greatly as a programmer and we got along fine outside of it. But as colleagues, I f***ing wanted to blow his head off every single day and I think he probably wanted to do the same thing to me."

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INTERVIEW

LIGHTNING REACTIONS

With the FFXIII trilogy now done, Square's Yoshinori Kitase and Yuji Abe discuss life after Lightning

Why did you decide to take *Final Fantasy* in a new direction with *Lightning Returns*?

Abe: We had *XIII* and *XIII-2* so number three couldn't be called *XIII-3*, of course. We decided against it and wanted to call it *Lightning Returns*. From day one, we wanted to make this almost as a completely new game. We wanted to give it a new direction, new everything, including the feel of the game. It should have been something that wasn't delivered by *XIII* and *XIII-2* previously. So we just wanted to make a new game, basically.

What is it about Lightning that appeals to you so much?

Kitase: Well I guess that Lightning is a character you can look up to, whether you're a male gamer or female gamer – she has a non-gender-specific charm. We're talking around the world and those attending E3 and Gamescom. I got in touch with other publishers releasing other games and I very rarely bump into strong female protagonists. The only other exception possibly is Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider* which is obviously also from our games, and I think lots of people like to play as or interact with a female character who is very strong-minded and is very strong, so that's one of the reasons Lightning is so special.

Was the human direction a response to criticism of Lightning being too cold, too serious and too detached?

Kitase: Not so much that we received this critique from fans about her being too cold or too detached or whatever you said. It was my own take. After I made the first two games, I had this idea that... let's take Cloud from *FFVII*, for example. Eventually he experiences triumph as a very strong character but in the process, he has to show a lot of weakness and sensitivity and vulnerability. That accentuates, in the end, how strong or powerful he has become. The same thing with Lightning's depiction. I thought okay, she's very powerful, very strong, very tough. That's fine. But that side of her character can only be accentuated in a positive way if the other side of her character, which is weak or sensitive or whatever, has been described. Particularly as this was her final chapter, we wanted to describe that side of her so she can be loved five or ten years from now, as I said.

What have you learnt that you'll take forward to future *Final Fantasy* projects?

Abe: When we finished with the first and second one, with each milestone, we collected feedback from the fans as well as the team members. Something we learnt a lot from throughout the process is when you make the sequel and then number three, obviously, how to make these sequels takes some special time. You can take high specs but that means you feel more pressure to deliver very high quality games, so as we took each step, we accumulated more hours than what we should go for and everything. One thing I learned through the process is this. If we try to communicate the concept to the gamers without any particular direction or strong methodology, if you like, we end up in a situation where there's so much to do, so much going on in different teams, an enormous amount of work to do and everything gets so chaotic. In *Lightning Returns*, we just wanted to create more cinematics and more cutscenes to communicate some of the main concepts so we can streamline

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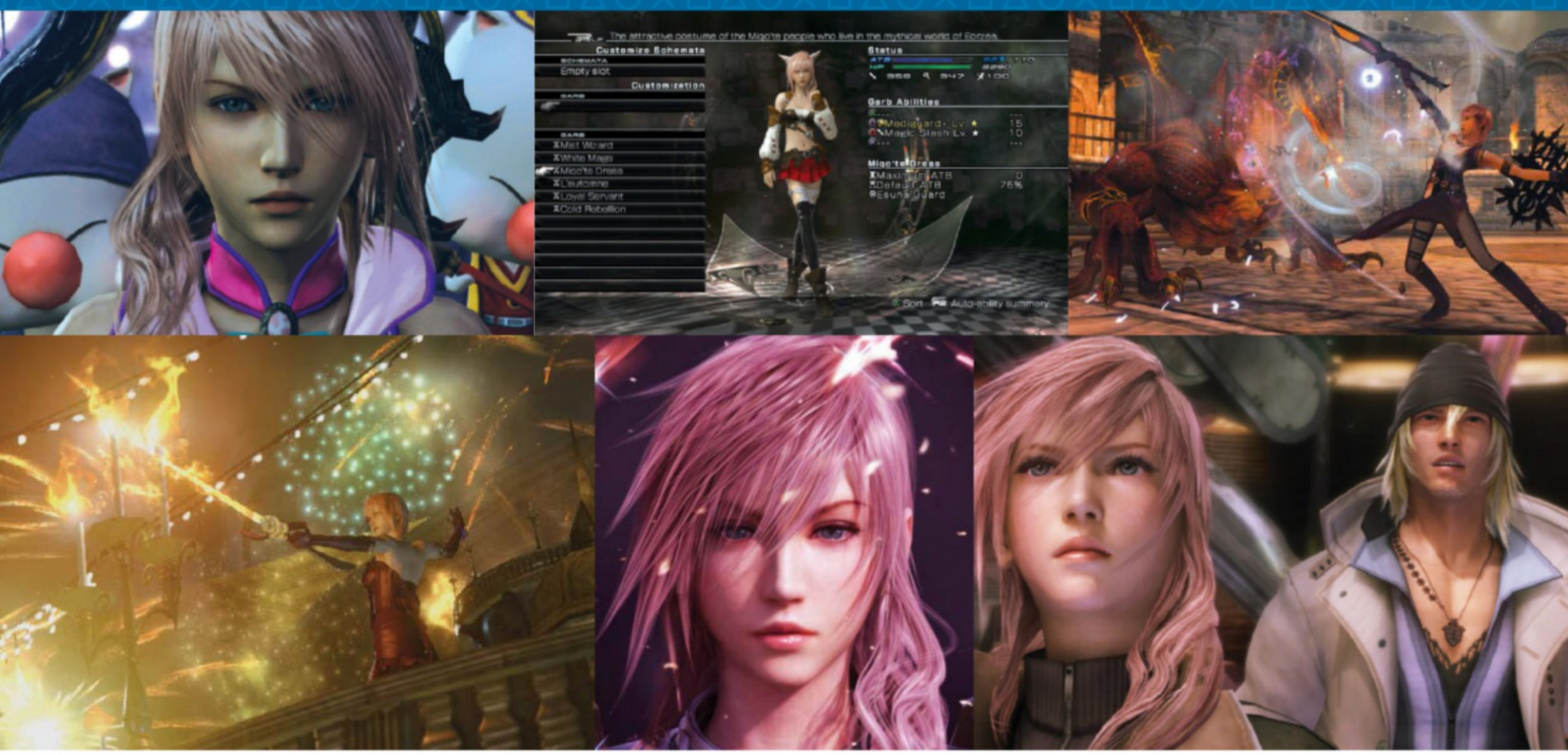

the story. That's something we can bring into any *Final Fantasy* game we may be involved with.

Kitase: What happens traditionally, in development of numbered *Final Fantasy* games, obviously there is a new concept, new characters, new universe, everything is going to be brand new so we have to start from scratch. It normally takes two to three years at least so you had to make a completely new game. So that's good in a way, maybe you end up with an original game and an original story and original characters and that's great. In *Final Fantasy XIII* there are three games involved, so each game there is something that we build on. We don't have to start from scratch. It's easier for us to set our target quite high and aim for it and create a high-quality game. I think that process was slightly easier for us because we didn't have to start with absolute zero. You can't simply say which methodology is better but in our case, with the *Final Fantasy XIII* series, this step-by-step approach really paid off in the end.

This trilogy is a first for the *Final Fantasy* series and it has spanned a long time. How do you feel the RPG genre changed during that time?

Abe: If I may talk specifically about *Final Fantasy* series, and the changes we have experienced, when we were making *XIII* I think we placed too much emphasis on beautiful graphics to make it something that made people say wow. So the game almost like, some people said the game consisted of symbols and storylines and not a lot else was going on. So I think in that sense we had not really fully departed from old-school JRPGs. In the process, when we made *XIII-2* and *Lightning Returns*, I think we had come to realise that okay, there has to be a world that you can explore and interact with – otherwise people will just be going round with really abstract pieces of plot and symbols. So that exploration is a key thing. That's the change we experienced personally.

The most common complaint heard about *Final Fantasy XIII* was that it took too long to open, that it was too linear at the start. Looking back, how do you feel about it?

Kitase: Yes. I can see a point in that argument. It's true that you have to go through a few steps before you actually enter the exploring stage at your will. But let's not forget the fact that there was a game we produced for new hardware, a new platform – the PS3, of course. And also that we were very keen to introduce a new battle system as well. So we thought... okay, we wanted to move away from the traditional and static battle system and develop something completely new that was a golden marriage between strategy and action.

We wanted to give each player enough time to learn how to make use of these attractive battle mechanics, therefore the tutorial had to be built into an early part of your experience. That tutorial may have felt a little bit too long and some people may not have enjoyed it as much as we had hoped but that introduction was important. We still do believe giving each player time to familiarise with a new system was necessary. Had we not done it, I think a lot of gamers would have been confused with the new system or found it very difficult to utilise it to its full potential. We just wanted to create opportunities for the gamer to learn intuitively how to bring out everything we wanted to incorporate it into the game. So it was necessary. I know it was long. I know lots of people didn't like it. We still believe it was a necessary step to take.

EXTENDED PLAY

STREET FIGHTER

Ultra Street Fighter IV is almost here, the final chapter in the game's long saga. Of course, Capcom said that last time, but it feels a bit more believable now, for some reason. To help gear up and get ready to throw down one more time, why not go back and experience everything the series has to offer?

STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE ONLINE EDITION

■ **STREET FIGHTER IV** might have revitalised the fighting game genre and ensured a healthy future for the series, but many hardcore fans are divided as to whether it is actually a good game. One thing we can pretty much all agree on, however, is which *Street Fighter* game *is* the best, and that game is *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*.

Why is *3rd Strike* the best *Street Fighter* game ever made? There are a number of reasons, but essentially this is one of the most rewarding, hardcore fighting games ever made, an example of all that makes the genre great.

The parry mechanic alone is enough to elevate *3rd Strike* into the upper echelon of fighting games. By tapping forward the moment you are about to be hit, rather than holding back to block, you will parry the attack, suffering no chip damage or block stun and allowing you to fight back immediately. The concept of moving into your enemy's attack is utterly alien and a huge risk, but the reward of pulling off a successful parry is enormous. Theoretically, skilled players can go entire matches without being hit in *3rd Strike*, and it's not uncommon to see professionals parry huge, multi-hit supers.

That's not all, though. A varied and interesting cast of characters and some of the most beautifully animated sprites we've ever seen make the game a joy to watch, even now, 15 years down the line. The Online Edition released on PSN a couple of years ago has rock-solid GGPO netcode and a bunch of extra features, making it the best £15 you may ever spend. Utterly essential for anyone who considers themselves a fan of fighting games.

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TRIALS (STREET FIGHTER IV)

■ **ONE OF THE** best things *Street Fighter IV* has done for the genre is popularise combo trials. These give you a series of gradually harder combos for each character to learn and perform. It's a great way of helping you learn what your character can do, as well as offering some immediate reward in the form of completed trials.

If you want to get ready for *Ultra*, improve your execution and learn every character, going back and doing the trials in *Street Fighter IV* is a great way to do. Sure, there are going to be balance and move changes when *Ultra* hits, but the core style and basics combos of each character remain similar in every iteration.

TRAINING MODE

■ **YOU WANT TO** be a fighter? You want to be a force to be reckoned with, a name that commands respect? Then you need to practice. This is the thing that separates fighting games and other forms of legitimate competitive gaming from the rest of the medium – you want to be good, you have to put the time and effort in. Some people will naturally have better execution and reactions than others, but the amount of time spent practicing is far, far more important than that.

Many gamers won't consider such an approach enjoyable. They play games to unwind and have fun, and that's fine. Some of us, though, have a competitive spirit, a drive to improve and be the best we can be. For us, fighting games are perhaps the greatest challenge in all of gaming.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO HD REMIX

■ **FAN OPINION IS** again split when it comes to the most recent version of the classic *Street Fighter II*. Many disliked the new balance changes, but those can be turned off for players who prefer the classic balancing of *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*. Perhaps more controversial were the new HD graphics, likened to a glorified Flash game by some. Regardless of what you think of the new art style, this is still *Street Fighter II*, the game that essentially created fighting games as we know them today. It's still an absolute blast and has a bunch of people still playing regularly online. Playing *Super Turbo* to a high level will give you rock solid fundamentals, an understanding of the core fighting game strategies that will set you up to excel at newer, more complex games.

TROPHY GUIDE

It's been a great couple of months for games, and since it's been a while since we told you the best ways to mop up those Trophies we thought now would be a good time to ensure you're not missing out. We've picked out the best games for PS3 and PS4 that – if you haven't already – you really should go back to and grab the Platinums...

INFAMOUS: SECOND SON

PLATFORM: PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 1/5 **TROPHIES:** 48 1 2 11 34

■ **AS A SERIES** the Trophies for *inFamous* have rarely been difficult, but have always required two playthroughs – one for good Karma and one for bad. i*nFamous: Second Son* is the same, and so is the need to tick off every collectable and side objective. Luckily they're all on the map once you clear out a DUP Station, so you'll have no trouble in this regard. There are a couple of tricky ones, though. There's a perfect spot for 'Double Smoke Stack Attack' at the start of the last mission after switching off the electrified cables – keep an eye out for the first vent you can enter and do the double vent Comet Drop here. 'Hat Trick' can be unlocked by using the different grenades of Smoke and Neon – which don't deal much damage – before finishing them off with Video. 'Keep It Up' is easier than it sounds, but if you're struggling simply unlock the Airwave ability in the Video power tree. Lastly 'Drop Everything' can only be completed once you've finished the game, 'cause you'll need to scale that tall building once again. Beyond that, there's nothing that isn't self-explanatory here.

DARK SOULS II

PLATFORM: PS3 **DIFFICULTY:** 4/5 **TROPHIES:** 38 1 2 23 12

■ THOUGH THE GAME itself is pretty tricky, unlocking all the Trophies doesn't actually ask too much of you. Most of the Trophies will unlock as you activate particular bonfires or defeat certain bosses. You'll also need to max out your devotion to any Covenant, as well as join each of the nine that are available – perhaps do the latter at the end of the game. You'll need to tick off various objectives to inherit armour, too, but the two that will be the biggest pain are 'Moonlight Greatsword' and 'Lucatiel'. For 'Moonlight Greatsword' you'll need to summon Benhart of Jugo for at least three fights, and have him survive them. After that you'll need to find and speak to him in four locations: at the Royal Army Campsite bonfire, at the Central Castle Drangleic bonfire, in the Memory of Jeigh near the starting stairs and at the Throne Watcher fight. 'Lucatiel' requires similar objectives, but for Lucatiel of Mirrah. Again, summon her for three boss fights and have her survive three then speak to her at: No Man's Wharf bonfire, the McDuff bonfire at Lost Bastille, Lower Earthen Peak bonfire, the mouth of the Black Gulch bonfire and at Aldia's Keep.

THIEF

PLATFORM: PS3/PS4
DIFFICULTY: 3/5
TROPHIES: 38 1 5 8 24

■ **YOU ARE GOING** to need to play through *Thief* twice if you want that Platinum Trophy. During your first playthrough you might as well stick it on any difficulty, but aim to collect absolutely everything and to clock 15 hours of game time before finishing it for 'More Heist Less Speed'. Additionally, try to pickpocket every guard you can for 'Sleight of Hand'. For the collectables you'll need the wrench, razor and wirecutters to ensure you get everything from a level. If you miss collectables, however, you can replay missions. You'll also want to tick off all the side-missions that are possible. On your second playthrough you'll need to play on Master difficulty and, if you haven't already, make sure you complete the game without ever alerting anyone or knocking them out or killing them. This will be tricky, of course, so save often. You'll also have to make sure not to use Focus; ideally this will be your first playthrough however (because it's harder to wean yourself off its helpful uses).

METAL GEAR SOLID V: GROUND ZEROES

PLATFORM: PS3/PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 2/5 **TROPHIES:** 15 1 1 13

■ SADLY THERE IS no Platinum Trophy available for *Ground Zeroes*, but no doubt you're still keen to get all of the other Trophies regardless. Some you'll get just for completing certain parts of the game, but you'll also need to aim to get S-Rank on every mission for 'Hero'. It's actually not too challenging, either – just aim to complete each mission as quickly as you can without being spotted or killing anyone. This still counts if you restart from a checkpoint, so it's probably better to do that than continue after having been spotted. There are also nine XOF badges to collect across the map: use your night-vision goggles to spot these pretty small items, and consider knocking out all the island's guards to make searching easier. 'Depth' is pretty easy since you can just tranquilise the two targets before extracting them via chopper. 'Rescue' requires finding and rescuing the prisoner due to be executed – he can be found before rescuing Chico in the north-east corner of the camp, next to some blue outhouses. 'Pacifist' requires you to use the Uragan-5 stun pistol instead of actual bullets, and make sure you don't accidentally kill anyone while shooting the tank. 'Infiltration' begins in a truck, so stay in it until you enter the secured courtyard, collect the cassette and then exit with the truck again. Lastly 'Extraction' requires you to find and rescue all four prisoners; three can be found in Chico's holding area and one can be found in the admin building where Paz was imprisoned.

FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN

PLATFORM: PS3/PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 4/5
TROPHIES: 39 1 3 15 20

■ **THERE'S A HUGE** grind involved with *Final Fantasy XIV*, so be prepared to put hundreds of hours in. That's because the Trophies are a fairly uninspired lot; there's a Trophy for doing a particular task the first time, and then a corresponding Trophy for doing it the 1,000th time. In other words, there's a lot of crafting, leveling, selling and generally working involved to get this Platinum. You can check the progress of all your Trophies quite easily in the menu, but it's worthy remembering the requirements and ticking them off gradually as you play. No one wants to spending hours end-game fishing 1,000 fish, so if you are interested then simply tick them off as your progress through the game, completing various objectives in a cyclical fashion – it'd be more fun that way, anyway.

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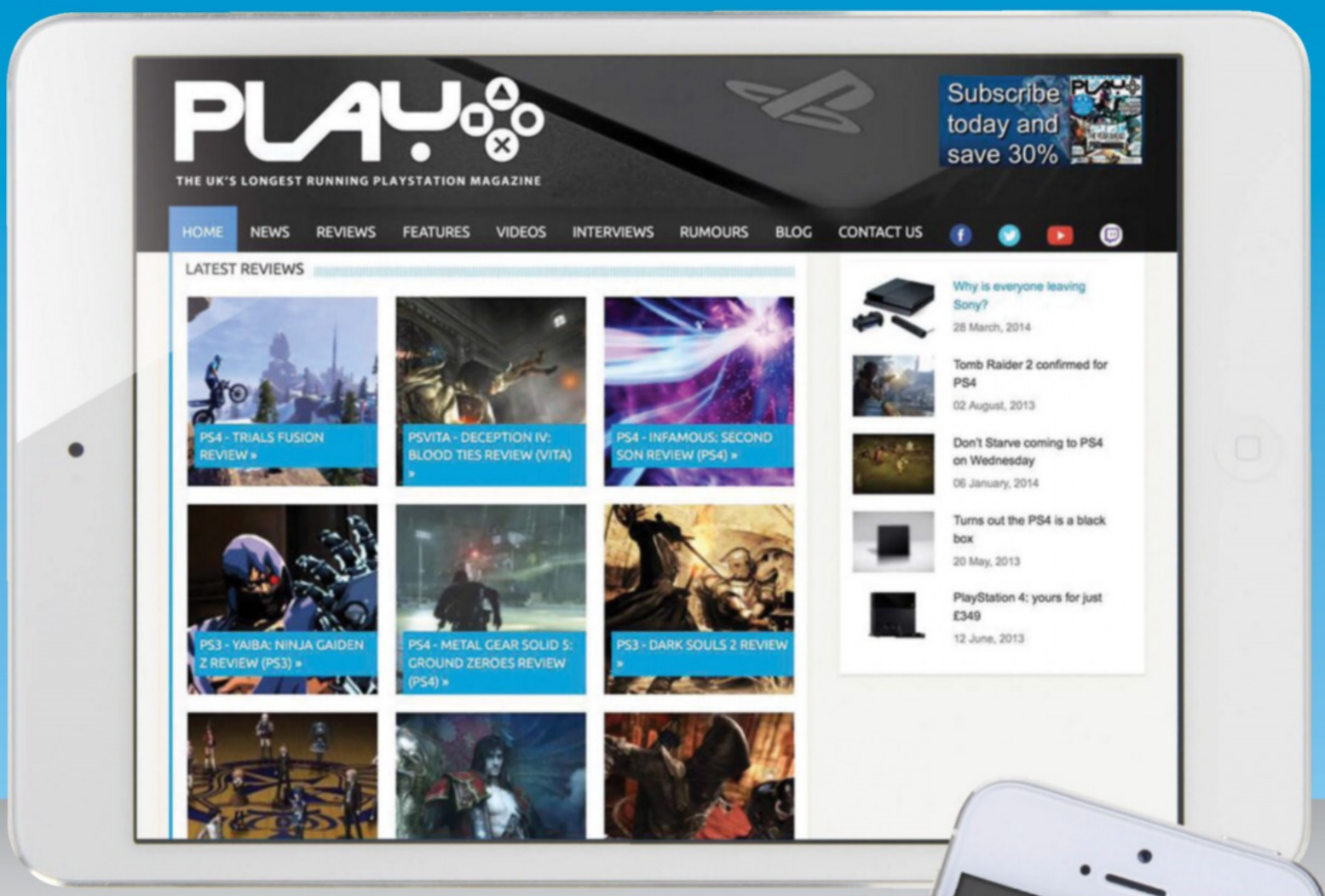

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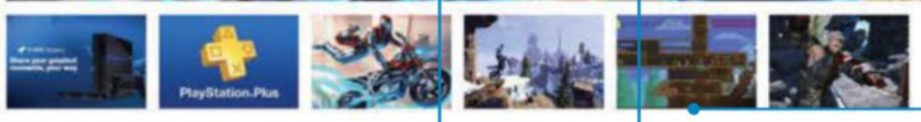

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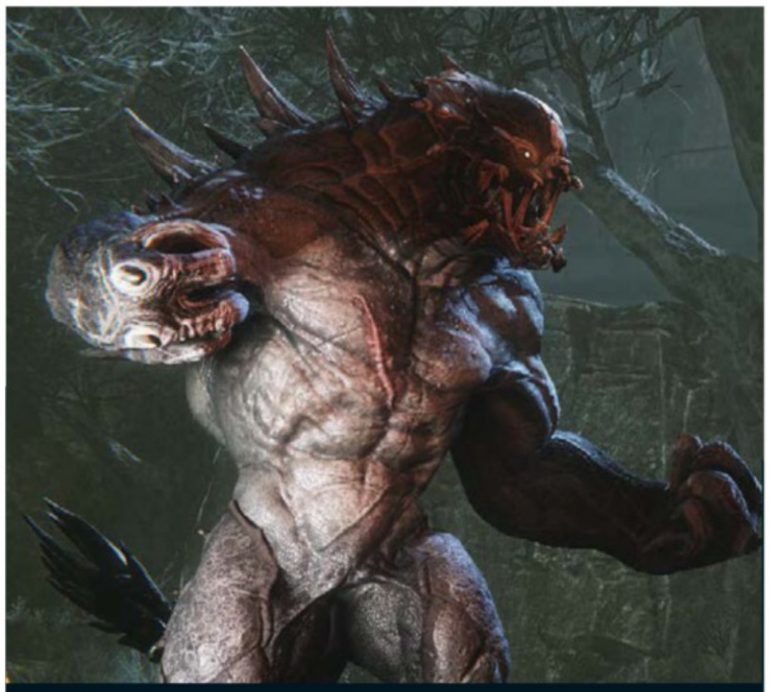

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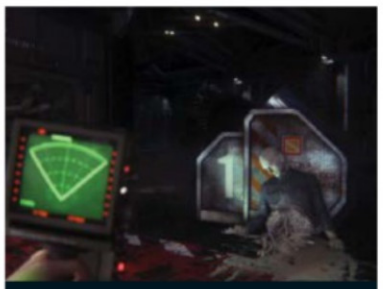
FOUR HUMANS, ONE MONSTER. WHAT COULD GO WRONG?



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COWARDS NEED NOT APPLY

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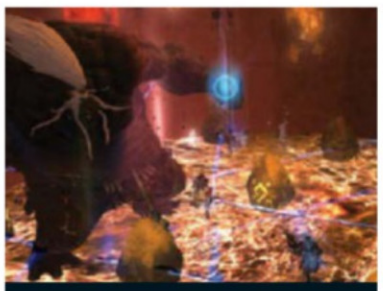
FPS WARFARE ON A HUGE SCALE



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TOURNAMENTS!

We are still running regular tournaments on Twitch, with prizes for the best players. These prizes tend to be games, but if we have any books, shirts or other assorted tat lying around we might throw that in as well. The game we play tends to change each week, so make sure you keep an eye on our Twitter, Facebook and Twitch channels for your own chance to play and win!

BLAZBLUE: CHRONO PHANTASMA

We love fighting games here on Play, and the newest BlazBlue title is a cracker. We've already streamed plenty of this, but we aim to continue doing so in the future – with all the balance tweaks, we're still trying to settle on a new main character. Come watch us kick the crap out of those noobs on games™!

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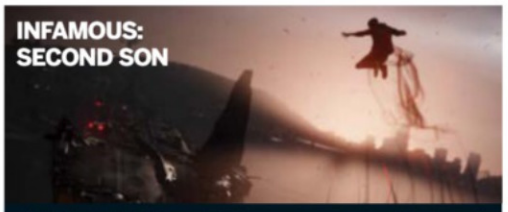
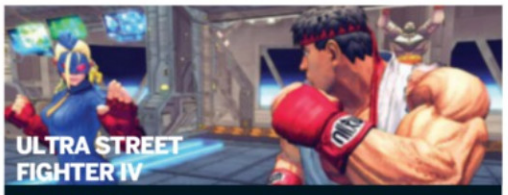
BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

TAKE A LOOK at the evolution of Batman games, starting way back in the Seventies through to the present day. We've come a long way.



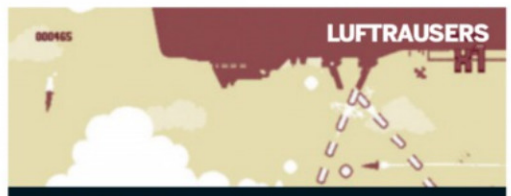
WE'VE GOT A guide to some of the trickiest Trophies in Sucker Punch's smash. You'll have that Platinum in no time...



THE FINAL CHARACTER has been revealed and... it's kind of disappointing. Take a look at the newest trailer and find out why.

THE YEAR OF PS4

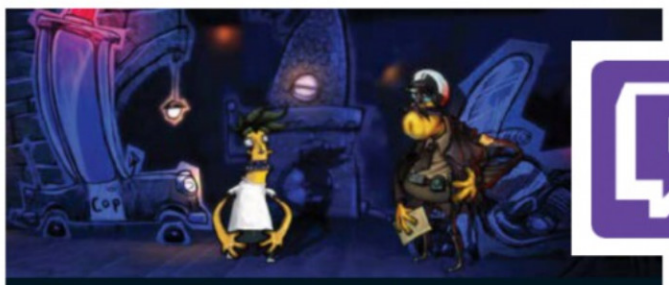
WE'VE DOCUMENTED THE best games coming up over the next 12 months. Trust us, there is a whole lot to be excited about.



ONE OF OUR favourite indies right now is this shooter from the guys behind *Ridiculous Fishing*. Take a look and see why.

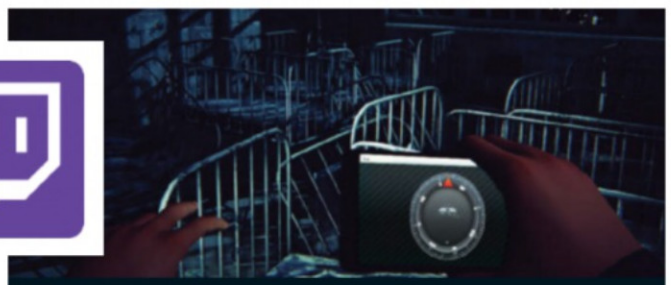
DARK SOULS II

STILL STRUGGLING WITH *Dark Souls II*? We've got a bunch of handy guides and advice, all in an easy-to-digest video format. What are you waiting for? Get learning!



STICK IT TO THE MAN!

Stumped in this quirky PS Plus adventure? Never fear. Simply tune into our live stream of *Stick It To The Man!* and you'll likely see the solution to whichever one of the bonkers puzzles it is that you've found yourself stuck on. Not all of them make a great deal of sense...



DAYLIGHT

Watching other people play horror games is a lifesaver for people who are a bit too scared to play them themselves. Luckily for you, we love horror games, so come watch us scare ourselves senseless and save yourself the trouble.

SHARING

PS4: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

If a monthly dose of Play isn't enough PS4 for you, check out Imagine Publishing's new bookazine, PS4 The Complete Manual. It's a complete guide to you new console, from basic stuff like setting up the system through to advanced tips like switching out the hard drive. Pick it up for only £7.99 in any good mag retailer, or order one on greatdigitalmags.com.

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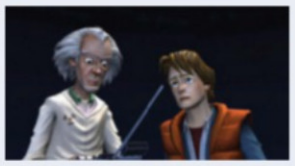
TEAM PICKS
BEST PLAYSTATION 3 GAMES

top five
LUKE ALBIGÉS

1. Borderlands 2
2. Rock Band 3
3. Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
4. Bayonetta
5. Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown

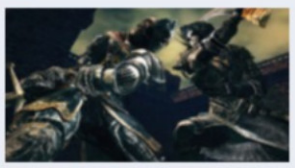


top five
LIAM WARR

1. Back To The Future: The Game
2. LA Noire
3. Grand Theft Auto V
4. Dirt 3
5. Red Dead Redemption

top five
STEVE HOLMES

1. Fallout 3
2. BioShock
3. The Last Of Us
4. Deus Ex: Human Revolution
5. Mass Effect 2



top five
SAM SMITH

1. Dark Souls
2. BioShock Infinite
3. Mass Effect 2
4. The Last Of Us
5. Valkyria Chronicles

PS4 LISTING

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	**237**	**83%**
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	**238**	**75%**
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	74%
Don't Starve	**240**	**81%**
Dynasty Warriors 8 Xtreme Legends Complete Edition	243	80%
Fez	**243**	**95%**
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	**243**	**85%**
inFamous: Second Son	**242**	**86%**
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Knack	**238**	**55%**
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	**242**	**85%**
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
Outlast	**241**	**73%**
Resogun	**238**	**91%**

An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up, *Resogun* is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff.

Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Thief	**241**	**70%**
Tiny Brains	240	68%
War Thunder	**239**	**80%**

PS3 LISTING

007 Legends	225	44%
1942: Joint Strike	**170**	**74%**
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
3D Dot Game Heroes	**192**	**87%**
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	**211**	**78%**
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	**177**	**61%**
After Burner Climax	**193**	**91%**
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	**223**	**43%**
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age of Booty	**172**	**81%**
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	**207**	**57%**
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assualt	**201**	**82%**
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Aliens: Colonial Marines	**230**	**45%**
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	**214**	**64%**
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	**193**	**83%**
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	**194**	**73%**
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquaplus Dream Match	**239**	**70%**
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	**207**	**79%**
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	**173**	**65%**
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	**217**	**60%**
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	**188**	**65%**
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	**203**	**27%**
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	**186**	**89%**
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	**199**	**91%**
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	**216**	**67%**
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	**198**	**77%**
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	**204**	**71%**
The Baconing	210	72%
Band Hero	**187**	**68%**
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	**211**	**94%**
Batman: Arkham Origins	**237**	**85%**
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	**182**	**89%**
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	**190**	**93%**
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	**219**	**44%**
Bayonetta*	**187**	**93%**
The Beatles: Rock Band	**184**	**96%**
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Skecther	**201**	**85%**
Beowulf	161	61%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	**207**	**86%**
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	**216**	**70%**
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	**169**	**88%**
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	**172**	**93%**
BioShock 2	**189**	**88%**
BioShock Infinite	**230**	**97%**
BioShock Infinite: Burial At Sea - Ep 2	243	70%
Birds Of Steel	**217**	**55%**
BlackSite	163	43%
Blacklight: Tango Down	**200**	**64%**
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	**160**	**58%**
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	**190**	**85%**
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	**198**	**94%**
BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma	**243**	**91%**
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	**209**	**63%**
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	**202**	**54%**
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	**210**	**54%**
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	**185**	**80%**
Borderlands 2	**223**	**90%**

Borderlands 2 is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.

The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	**188**	**93%**
Brink	206	67%
Brother: A Tale Of Two Sons	**233**	**83%**
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	**185**	**79%**
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	**235**	**57%**
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	**162**	**74%**
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	**168**	**82%**
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	**155**	**81%**
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	**173**	**68%**
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	**186**	**94%**
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	**199**	**94%**
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	**181**	**85%**
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	**208**	**30%**
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	**200**	**88%**
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	**197**	**85%**
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	81%
Carnival Island	**213**	**53%**
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	**208**	**68%**
The Cave	230	77%
Catherine	**215**	**61%**
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	**178**	**87%**
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Chime Super Deluxe	**203**	**80%**
Civilization Revolution	**168**	**90%**
Clash Of The Titans	**193**	**65%**
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	**163**	**80%**
Colin McRae: DiRT	**158**	**91%**
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	**184**	**87%**
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Commander's Challenge	**185**	**68%**
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	**186**	**84%**
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	**160**	**71%**
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	**199**	**70%**
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	**223**	**89%**
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	**218**	**37%**
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	**199**	**71%**
Cresent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	**188**	**91%**
Cross Edge	**182**	**59%**
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	**204**	**72%**
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubixx HD	**207**	**76%**
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	**181**	**38%**
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	**201**	**52%**
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	242	85%
Dante's Inferno	**189**	**80%**
Dark Mist	164	53%
The Darkness	**154**	**91%**
The Darkness II	**215**	**76%**
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	**211**	**90%**
Dark Souls II	**242**	**90%**
Darkstalkers Resurrection	**230**	**82%**
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	**188**	**83%**
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	**202**	**80%**
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	**223**	**78%**
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	**231**	**65%**
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	**211**	**61%**
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	**201**	**92%**
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead Space: Extraction	**203**	**88%**
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	**192**	**68%**
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	**201**	**86%**
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	**195**	**83%**
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	**199**	**72%**
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	**193**	**92%**
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	**178**	**29%**
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	**209**	**91%**
Devil May Cry 4	**163**	**89%**
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%

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THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	85%
BioShock Infinite: Burial At Sea – Episode Two	70%
Dynasty Warriors 8 Xtreme Legends Complete Edition	80%
Fez	95%
The Witch And The Hundred Knight	72%
Final Fantasy X-X2 HD Remaster	83%
Luftrausers	79%
The Walking Dead: Season Two Episode 2	74%
BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma	91%
Deception IV: Blood Ties	78%

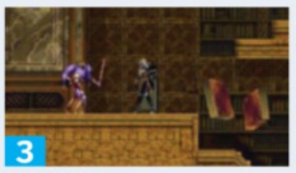
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Diablo III	**235**	**89%**
Digger HD	186	52%
DiRT 3	**206**	**85%**
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	**175**	**81%**
Dishonored	**224**	**92%**
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	**186**	**91%**
DJ Hero 2	**198**	**88%**
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	**225**	**69%**
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC Devil May Cry	**227**	**93%**
DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	**203**	**86%**
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	**168**	**61%**
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	**209**	**68%**
Droplitz	**184**	**91%**
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara	**233**	**80%**
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	**233**	**51%**
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	**176**	**43%**
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	**189**	**37%**
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	**181**	**44%**
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	**230**	**40%**
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	**196**	**89%**
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	**215**	**75%**
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	**178**	**38%**
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	**169**	**85%**
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	**208**	**64%**
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	**152**	**91%**
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	**212**	**93%**
Elefunk	**170**	**45%**
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	**152**	**69%**
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	**197**	**83%**
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	**176**	**87%**
Eufloria	**212**	**85%**
Everybody's Golf 5	**158**	**88%**
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	**165**	**91%**
Explodemon	203	70%
Eye Of Judgment	**159**	**65%**
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	**197**	**86%**
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	**223**	**79%**
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	**170**	**55%**
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	**173**	**97%**
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	**227**	**40%**
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	**172**	**74%**
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	**231**	**85%**
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	**168**	**65%**
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	**176**	**87%**
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 10	**184**	**90%**
FIFA 11	**197**	**91%**
FIFA 12	**210**	**86%**
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	**236**	**90%**
FIFA Street (2012)	**217**	**74%**
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Final Fight: Double Impact	**193**	**90%**
The Fight	**199**	**42%**
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	**151**	**87%**
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	**236**	**81%**
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	**214**	**80%**
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	**198**	**51%**
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Flight Control HD	**198**	**85%**
Flock!	179	70%
Folklore	**158**	**66%**
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	**171**	**72%**
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	**221**	**55%**
From Dust	211	82%
Fuel	**180**	**49%**
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
Fuse	**232**	**73%**
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	**220**	**39%**
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	**207**	**62%**
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Geon	**175**	**71%**
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	**219**	**60%**
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	**183**	**22%**
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	**178**	**38%**
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	**230**	**90%**
With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, *Ascension* is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.		
God Of War Collection*	**188**	**93%**
God Of War Collection: Volume II	**210**	**70%**
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	**213**	**63%**
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	**200**	**85%**
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%
Grand Theft Auto IV	**166**	**98%**
Grand Theft Auto V	**236**	**97%**
Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece; the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	**219**	**22%**
Grid 2	232	79%
Green Day: Rock Band	**194**	**77%**
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	**191**	**94%**
Guardians Of Middle-Earth	**227**	**71%**
Guitar Hero III	**160**	**90%**
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	**168**	**63%**
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	**179**	**88%**
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	**197**	**71%**
Guitar Hero World Tour	**173**	**95%**
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	**181**	**85%**
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	**200**	**21%**
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	**182**	**60%**
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	**167**	**64%**
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	**189**	**94%**
Heavy Weapon	**187**	**75%**
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	**225**	**93%**
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	**203**	**69%**
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	**212**	**75%**
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	**190**	**87%**
Hyperdimension Neptunia	**202**	**21%**
I Am Alive	217	64%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	**210**	**94%**
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	**183**	**72%**
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	**180**	**81%**
inFamous 2	207	83%
Inferno Pool	**181**	**81%**
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
International Cricket 2010	**194**	**61%**
Inversion	220	49%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	**185**	**70%**
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	**193**	**50%**
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	**187**	**59%**
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	**187**	**64%**
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
Journey	**216**	**87%**
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Jurassic Park: The Game	**194**	**60%**
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	**160**	**73%**
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	**184**	**88%**
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killer Is Dead	**235**	**75%**
Killzone HD	225	65%
Killzone 2	**176**	**93%**
Killzone 3	**202**	**80%**
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	**215**	**70%**
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	**213**	**76%**
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung-Fu Live	**201**	**42%**
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	**196**	**65%**
Lair	158	52%
Landit Bandit	**195**	**66%**
LA Noire	**206**	**91%**
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	**198**	**90%**
The Last Guy	**171**	**91%**
Last Rebellion	**191**	**42%**
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	**174**	**54%**
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	**173**	**65%**
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	**194**	**79%**
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	**167**	**73%**
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	**206**	**76%**
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	**160**	**76%**
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	**227**	**85%**
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	**209**	**90%**
Linger In The Shadows	173	69%
LittleBigPlanet	**172**	**94%**
LittleBigPlanet 2	**201**	**96%**
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	**159**	**80%**

*denotes import review

TOP TEN SIDE-SCROLLING GAMES

1 **Metal Slug Anthology**

2 **Contra III**



3 **Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night**

4 **Gunstar Heroes**

5 **Gradius 5**

6 **R-Type Final**

7 **Tomba!**

8 **Limbo**

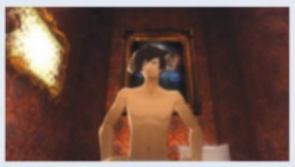
9 **Castle Crashers**

10 **Mercenary Kings**

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...

LAUGHING
PLAY: SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

Probably the funniest game that we've ever played, *The Stick Of Truth* manages to be laugh-out-loud hilarious for the entirety of its run time. It's a decent game to boot, with surprisingly strong RPG mechanics.



SHEEP
PLAY: CATHERINE

The puzzles in *Catherine* all take place in a bizarre dream world where every other person is a humanoid sheep, trapped and forced to climb up endless towers of blocks or otherwise fall to their deaths. So weird...

AWESOME MUSIC
PLAY: GUITAR HERO: VAN HALEN

We love Van Halen. The only problem with this game is that it's only got David Lee Roth-era songs, with nothing from the Sammy Hagar period. This is a big deal to us.

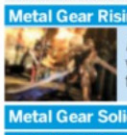
CONTROVERSY
PLAY: KILLER IS DEAD

The 'Gigolo Mode' side missions in *Killer Is Dead* sparked some serious debate when Suda 51's game surfaced last year, but buried underneath all the controversy is a pretty good hack-and-slash game.

MERCENARY KINGS
PLAY: METAL SLUG

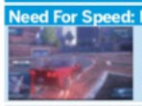
If you are enjoying *Mercenary Kings*, try to pick up the *Metal Slug Anthology* on PSP or PS2 for a collection of the first six games in the outstanding *Metal Slug* series.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	**221**	**45%**
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	**175**	**52%**
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	**192**	**75%**
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	**163**	**69%**
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Luftrausers	**243**	**79%**
Lumines Supernova	**178**	**90%**
Madagascar 3	**224**	**39%**
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	**196**	**84%**
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	**223**	**86%**
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	**220**	**70%**
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	**189**	**68%**
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	**208**	**70%**
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	**182**	**90%**
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	**202**	**88%**
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	**185**	**57%**
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	**201**	**97%**
Mass Effect 3	**216**	**93%**
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	**189**	**69%**
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	**161**	**85%**
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	**213**	**47%**
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	**192**	**82%**
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	**228**	**91%**



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.

Metal Gear Solid 4	**167**	**92%**
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	**214**	**91%**
Metro: Last Light	**231**	**60%**
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	**202**	**51%**
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	**202**	**38%**
Minecraft	**240**	**93%**
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	**173**	**71%**
ModNation Racers	**192**	**90%**
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	**195**	**94%**
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	**205**	**81%**
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	**204**	**64%**
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	**173**	**60%**
MotorStorm	**151**	**92%**
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	**203**	**76%**
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	**172**	**93%**
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	**206**	**42%**
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	**164**	**58%**
nail'd	201	61%
Namco Museum Essentials	**193**	**60%**
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	**217**	**53%**
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	**195**	**64%**
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	**224**	**88%**
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 09	**170**	**81%**
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	**151**	**76%**
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	**199**	**91%**
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	**225**	**95%**



Need For Speed: Most Wanted is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.

Need For Speed ProStreet	**161**	**86%**
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	**213**	**63%**
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	**215**	**39%**
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	**227**	**85%**
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	**198**	**89%**
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	**223**	**74%**
NiGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	**154**	**88%**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	**217**	**63%**
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	**177**	**85%**
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	**155**	**82%**
Numblast	183	60%
Okami HD	**225**	**90%**
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	**224**	**69%**
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	**205**	**75%**
The Orange Box	**161**	**93%**
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	**180**	**80%**
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	**181**	**68%**
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	**201**	**91%**
Pain	**183**	**69%**
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	**235**	**79%**
Peggle	**189**	**94%**
Persona 4 Arena	**231**	**91%**

Essential for both *Persona* fans and fighting game enthusiasts. *Persona 4 Arena* is an absolute joy to play.

PES 2010	**185**	**72%**
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	**210**	**74%**
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	**220**	**40%**
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Shooter	**187**	**93%**
PixelJunk Shooter 2	**204**	**90%**
PixelJunk SideScroller	**213**	**77%**
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	**160**	**74%**
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	**196**	**58%**
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	**204**	**54%**
Poker Night 2	232	55%
POTC: At World's End	**154**	**48%**
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	**205**	**95%**
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	**173**	**67%**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	**200**	**88%**
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	**181**	**76%**
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	**216**	**76%**
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	**236**	**70%**
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	**194**	**69%**
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimensions	**208**	**81%**
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	**221**	**90%**
Quantum Of Solace	**175**	**57%**
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	**167**	**85%**
Rachet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Racket Sports	**198**	**37%**
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists OF Plastic	179	83%
Rage	**211**	**60%**
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Rainbow Six Vegas	**155**	**88%**
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	**203**	**54%**
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	**211**	**68%**
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	**221**	**88%**
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	**212**	**80%**
Red Dead Redemption	**193**	**92%**
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	**180**	**80%**
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	**211**	**78%**
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	**211**	**72%**
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	**232**	**71%**
Resident Evil 4 HD	**210**	**93%**
Resident Evil 5	**177**	**86%**
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	**151**	**83%**
Resistance 2	**173**	**90%**
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	**191**	**79%**
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	**191**	**60%**
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	**217**	**67%**
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	**176**	**58%**
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Risk: Factions	**202**	**80%**
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rock Band	**169**	**94%**
Rock Band 2	**179**	**96%**
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocket Knight	**194**	**74%**
Rocketmen" Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Rocksmith	**223**	**78%**
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	**209**	**49%**
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	**197**	**82%**
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	**180**	**76%**
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	**211**	**88%**
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	**216**	**52%**
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	**194**	**90%**
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	**194**	**92%**
Savage Moon	**175**	**87%**
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	**198**	**36%**
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	**195**	**92%**
Sega Rally Online Arcade	**208**	**74%**
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	**209**	**80%**
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	**220**	**54%**
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	**158**	**92%**
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	**198**	**76%**
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	**197**	**86%**
Shatter	**183**	**91%**
Shaun White Skateboarding	**198**	**70%**
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	**177**	**32%**
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	**199**	**76%**
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	**217**	**81%**
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	**174**	**64%**
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%
The Simpsons Game	**160**	**82%**
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	**212**	**70%**
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	**195**	**80%**
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	**159**	**86%**
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	**192**	**86%**
Skullgirls	218	88%
Sleeping Dogs	**222**	**80%**
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	**230**	**60%**
Sniper Elite V2	**218**	**52%**
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	**230**	**55%**
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Soldner-X-2: Final Prototypes	**195**	**70%**
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	**225**	**69%**
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	**199**	**82%**
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	225	40%

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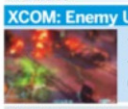
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	**190**	**78%**
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	**212**	**70%**
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	**175**	**48%**
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	**169**	**94%**
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
South Park: The Stick of Truth	**242**	**81%**
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	**155**	**33%**
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	**197**	**69%**
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	**174**	**32%**
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	**153**	**79%**
Split/Second: Velocity	**192**	**90%**
Sports Champions	**196**	**83%**
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	**216**	**45%**
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	**219**	**81%**
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	**231**	**52%**
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	**171**	**65%**
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	**230**	**79%**
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	**178**	**51%**
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	**209**	**92%**
Street Fighter IV	**176**	**95%**
Street Fighter X Tekken	**217**	**83%**
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Strider	**242**	**62%**
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	**151**	**83%**
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	**177**	**65%**
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	**183**	**66%**
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	**190**	**55%**
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	**176**	**72%**
Super Street Fighter IV	**191**	**90%**
Supremacy MMA	**211**	**40%**
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	**199**	**88%**
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	**222**	**77%**
Tales Of Monkey Island	**196**	**91%**
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tank Battles	**186**	**68%**
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	**184**	**94%**
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	**223**	**90%**
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	**221**	**60%**
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	**203**	**62%**
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	**233**	**94%**

When *The Last Of Us* is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.

The Last Of Us: Left Behind	242	81%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	**224**	**55%**
The Walking Dead	**231**	**92%**

The Walking Dead should be required playing for anyone who considers themselves a fan of our favourite medium.

The Walking Dead: Season Two: A House Divided	243	74%
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	**231**	**20%**
The Witch And The Hundred Knight	243	72%
Thor: God Of Thunder	**206**	**38%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	**166**	**69%**
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	**162**	**72%**
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%
TNA Impact!	**171**	**71%**
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	**173**	**80%**
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	**196**	**69%**
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	**210**	**78%**
Tomb Raider	**229**	**90%**
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	**173**	**83%**
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	**223**	**73%**
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	**188**	**52%**
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	**198**	**53%**
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	**168**	**71%**
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Topotai: Spinning Through Worlds	**183**	**61%**
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Home	**162**	**31%**
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	**208**	**64%**
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	**194**	**80%**
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	**159**	**50%**
Trine	184	85%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	**202**	**56%**
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	**200**	**17%**
Tumble	198	70%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	**165**	**40%**
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	**199**	**53%**
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	**203**	**64%**
UFC Undisputed 2009	**180**	**90%**
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	**215**	**82%**
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	**161**	**87%**
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	**185**	**96%**
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	**212**	**90%**
Under Seige	**207**	**71%**
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinsihed Swan	**225**	**78%**
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	**151**	**54%**
Uno	189	85%
Vagrent Story	**189**	**82%**
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	**189**	**76%**
Vandal Hearts: Flames of Judgement	192	87%
Vanquish	**197**	**93%**
Viking: Battle For Asgard	**165**	**74%**
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	**220**	**90%**
Virtua Tennis 3	**150**	**91%**
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	**195**	**65%**
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	**234**	**83%**
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	**210**	**51%**
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	**202**	**14%**
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	**183**	**55%**
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	**184**	**41%**
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	**188**	**56%**
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	**207**	**49%**
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout HD	**172**	**84%**
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	**183**	**72%**
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	**224**	**85%**
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	**201**	**80%**
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	**217**	**80%**
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	**211**	**63%**
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real 11	**204**	**69%**
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	**178**	**80%**
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	**199**	**63%**
WWE 12	212	50%
WWE 13	**225**	**55%**
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	**224**	**94%**



Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: *XCOM* is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.

X-Men Arcade	**203**	**60%**
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	**179**	**71%**
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	242	35%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	**216**	**60%**
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	**203**	**79%**
Yar's Rev	206	57%
Zen Pinball 2	**224**	**90%**
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	**213**	**69%**
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	**182**	**78%**

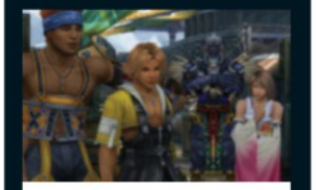
PS VITA LISTING

A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	**217**	**64%**
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	**221**	**35%**
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	**216**	**85%**
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Dead Nation	**201**	**86%**
Deception IV	243	78%
Dokuro	**230**	**71%**
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	**216**	**81%**
FIFA Football	216	80%
Final Fantasy X/X-2 HD Remaster	**243**	**83%**
flOw	**151**	**90%**
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	**187**	**85%**
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	**233**	**85%**
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	**194**	**96%**
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	**223**	**93%**
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	**216**	**85%**
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	**215**	**59%**
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	**217**	**81%**
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	**224**	**70%**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	**230**	**60%**
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	**230**	**55%**
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	**228**	**94%**
PixelJunk Monsters	**163**	**94%**
Puddle	**222**	**82%**
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	**215**	**52%**
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	**216**	**48%**
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	**225**	**32%**
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	**232**	**85%**
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	**234**	**41%**
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumioni: Demon Arts	**230**	**46%**
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	**239**	**80%**
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	**216**	**83%**
Toukiden: The Age Of Demons	241	86%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	**216**	**80%**
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	**215**	**83%**
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	**215**	**81%**
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipEout 2048	**215**	**87%**

**denotes import review*

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

FFX HD

WHY (was it chosen?)

I need to spank those Dark Aeons

LUKE ALBIGÉS

IT'S BEEN YEARS since I last played *Final Fantasy X*, but the good news is that I'm still loving it every bit as much as I did back in the day. With a decade of additional RPG experience under my belt now, I'm far more comfortable filling up that expert Sphere Grid and grinding my way to those Celestial Weapons. The annoying thing is that Lulu is by far and away my most powerful character and getting her ultimate weapon is... well, it's probably one of the most annoying things I've ever had to do in a game. I can still remember how long it took me to dodge all those bloody lightning bolts in the PS2 original and every time I try on Vita, I die a little inside. I'll do it eventually but for the time being, I'll just keep putting it off. After all, there are still a bunch of Blitzball tournaments to play...

WHAT (have they been playing?)

Mercenary Kings

WHY (was it chosen?)

Because I love run-and-guns

SAM SMITH

I ADORE THE *Metal Slug* series and *Contra III* is one of my favourite games, so it's pretty obvious that I love *Mercenary Kings*. By combining the gameplay and beautiful sprites of those classics with the mission structure of *Monster Hunter* you have a game that I'm going to be playing for weeks.

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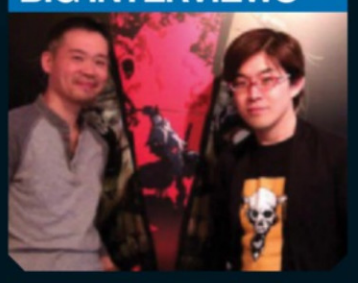
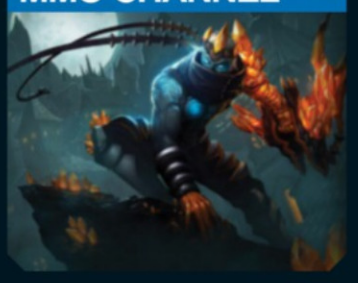


MMO CHANNEL



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